

SERMONS

PREACH'D
ON SEVERAL
Subjects.

VOLL. II.

By J. B.

DUBLIN:
Printed by E. Waters in School-
House-Lane, for the Use of the
AUTHOR, 1708.



ERRATA.

PAGE 16, line 14, for *and*, read *an*. p. 45, l. 13, for *adicted*, r. *addicted*. p. 57, l. 21, for *eligible* r. *eligi-ble*. p. 215, l. 9, for *at*, r. *of*. p. 235, for *'em*, r. *us*. p. 322, l. 26, del. *it*. p. 358, l. 3, for *this*, r. *his*. p. 375, l. 14, for *mo-ralities*, r. *morality*. p. 380, l. 17, for *graces*, r. *grace*. p. 382, l. 3, del. *in*. l. 7, for *disease*, r. *dilease*. p. 390, l. 19, for *possest*, r. *possestest*. p. 430, l. 10, for *sairest*, r. *fiercest*. p. 454, l. 14, for *fall*, r. *fell*. p. 458, l. 17, for *promoted*, r. *prompted*. p. 464, l. 25, for *deceives*, r. *deceive*. p. 514, l. pennult, after *where*, r. *where*. p. 535, l. 5, after *be*, r. *the*. p. 549, l. 3, for *livings*, r. *living*. p. 552, l. 21, for *mor*, r. *more*. p. 557, l. 28, for *putry'd*, r. *putrify'd*. p. 560, l. 6, for *momentary*, r. *momentany*. p. 565, l. 13, for *conversation*, r. *conv. r. flow*. p. 578, l. 7, for *lebenon* r. *Lebanon*. p. 585, l. 9, for *dead*, r. *dying*. p. 590, l. 11, for *descease*, r. *decease*. p. 591, l. 15, 16, for *defence*, r. *deference*. p. 613, l. 9, del. *God*.

TO THE
Congregation

Under the
AUTHOR, Pastoral Care.

A*S the Sermons contain'd in this Volume were formerly Preach'd to You; so to render 'em of more lasting Use and Service to the Good of Your Souls, is my chief Design in their present Publication. They may when leisurely Read, make a more deep and durable Impression than they cou'd when transiently Heard. And tho' I cannot say as the Apostle Peter, That I know I must shortly put off this Tabernacle; Yet I may say, That as long as I am in it, I think it meet to stirr you up, by putting You in remembrance of what has been formerly Deliver'd: I have therefore Endeavour'd, that after my Decease*

To the Congregation under
cease, you may have this brief Sum-
mary of practical Religion before
Your Eyes, 2 Pet. II. 13, 14, 15:
The Foundation of Christianity is
laid in Repentance towards God,
and Faith in Our Lord Jesus
Christ. And the Superstructure
is carried on by those two compre-
hensive Duties of superlative Love
to God, and sincere Love to our
Neighbour. And there are no
Motives to Excite us to those Du-
ties more powerful and persuasive
than what are drawn from the Con-
templation of the boundless Love of
God, especially as manifested in sen-
ding His Son to be the Propitia-
tion for Our Sins. And 'tis on
these important Heads that the Ser-
mons contain'd in this Volume
Treat. I am sensible indeed, that
these Excellent and Copious Sub-
jects will suffer much thro' my defe-
ctive Management of 'em. Nor am
I Ignorant that these Discourse

wan

the Author's Pastoral Care.

want many Ornaments that might have recommended 'em to the Gust of curious and critical Readers. But I have chosen rather to adapt 'em to the meanest Capacities, that they might be of more general Use. Those nice and dry Criticisms on the Words of the sacred Text which some are so prone to overvalue, are (as one fitly compares 'em) not unlike the Light of Winter Nights, that may be clear indeed, but is usually very Cold. And for over-studied Eloquence, 'Tis of farr less use in Popular Discourses. And indeed practical Christianity shines with the truest Lustre in its own native Simplicity and Plainness. Gold and Diamonds need no Paint to set 'em off. Divine Truths require nothing to command our Assent to 'em, but a clear Proposal of 'em. And the great Duties of Religion are better inculcated by Words of Weight and Authority that
may

To the Congregation, &c.
*may awaken and awe the Consci-
ences of Men, than by empty Flou-
rishes that only tickle their Ears.
Divine Food is not rendred the more
nourishing by poignant Sauce, or
excessive Garniture. And as the
Truths and Duties here recom-
mended, are the Essentials of Our
Holy Religion : So I can Appeal to
Your selves, That to promote the
Belief and Practice of 'em, has
been the chief scope of my Ministeri-
al Labours among you. 'Tis this
Image of our Blessed Lord (confi-
sing in a Faith working by Love)
that I long to see more entirely form'd
in your Hearts. And that is to me
incomparably more valuable than
the particular Inscription of any
Self-distinguish'd Party. I com-
mend you therefore to God and
to the Word of his Grace, which
is able to Build you up, and to
give you an Inheritance among
them that are Sanctify'd, Acts 20.*

The Contents.

On the Parable of the *Prodigal*.

From Luke 15. Vers. the 11th, to
Vers. 24th.

Sermon I, to p. 36.

Sermon II, from p. 37, to p. 71.

Sermon III, from p. 72, to p. 101.

Sermon IV, from p. 102, to p. 131.

Sermon V, from p. 132, to p. 165.

Sermon VI, from p. 166, to p. 204.

Faith the Principle of a Christian's Life,
from p. 205, to p. 246.

From Matth 22. 35, 36. Three Ser-
mons, on the Love of God.

Sermon I, from p. 247, to p. 281.

Sermon II. from p. 282, to p. 309.

Sermon, III. from p. 310, to p. 344.

From Matth 22. 39, 40. Three Sermons
on Love to our Neighbour.

Sermon

The Contents.

Sermon I. from p. 345, to p. 377.

Sermon II. from p. 378, to p. 409.

Sermon III. from p. 410, to p. 445.

On Love to an Unseen Saviour, from
p. 446, to p. 482.

Two Sermons on the Love of God in
sending his Son to be our Propitiation.

Sermon I. from p. 483, to p. 512.

Sermon II. from p. 513, to p. 546.

The Just Commendation of Aged Piety.

from Prov. 16. 31. from p. 547, to p.

586.

Early Piety Recommended, from 1 Chro.

28. 9. from p. 587, to the End.

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SER.

SERMONS

ON

The Parable

OF THE

Prodigal SON.

By J. B.

SERM. I.

DUBLIN:

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SERMONS, &c.

LUKE, Chap. XV.

Verf. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19;
20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

Verf. 11. *And he said, A certain Man had two Sons,*

12. *And the younger of 'em said to his Father. Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falls to me : And he divided unto 'em his Living.*

13. *And not many Days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his Journey into a far Country, and there wasted his Substance with riotous living.*

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land, and he began to be in want.*

15. *And he went and joined himself to a Citizen in that Country, and he sent him into his Fields to feed Swine.*

16. *And he wou'd fain have fill'd his Belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat ; And no Man gave unto him, &c. —*

THIS Parable of Our Blessed Saviour is at once so instructive and so affecting ; it does in so lively a manner represent the Extravagance and Folly of a licentious Sinner ; it does so clearly describe the miserable

4 *Sermons, on the prodigal Son.*

Consequences and mischievous Effects of his vicious Course : It does so admirably set forth the wise *Methods* of Heaven to recover and reclaim him; and the *ingenuous actings* of his Soul, when once brought into a relenting and penitential Frame. But above all, it does in so surprising a manner discover to us the *matchless Compassion* of an Offended God, to the greatest of Returning Sinners, that I shall in some Discourses insist upon it; in hopes that they may prove successful, to Awaken in some, such *Prodigals* as this in my Text, a deep Conviction of their *Folly and Guilt*, of their *Misery and Danger*; and produce in 'em those *sincere Resolutions* of returning to their Father, that will restore 'em to his *tenderest Embraces*, and to all the happy *Entertainments* of his *House and Family*.

If we look to the *occasion* of the Parable it self, it was design'd by way of tacit *Reproof* to those proud *Pharisees and Scribes*, that *murmur'd* because our Lord freely admitted *Publicans and Sinners* to be his *Hearers*; nay, because he often chose to converse with 'em, in order to *Instruct and Reclaim* 'em. To that End, he

Sermons, on the prodigal Son. 5

he proposes the *Parable* of the *Shepherd* that left the rest of *his 99 Sheep* that were safe in the *Fold*, to go and seek for one that was gone *astray*; which having found, he brought home with joy. And that of the *Woman* that sought so diligently for one of her *10 pieces of Silver* which she had lost, and express'd so great satisfaction upon her finding it again. And accordingly He tells us, *The Holy Angels themselves rejoiced in the Conversion of a Sinner*: Nay, in some respects, there was more joy in Heaven over one *Sinner* that repented, than over *99 persons* that needed no such *Repentance* (or *Conversion*,) see 4. 10. Which Words must be understood with some allusion to that *Passion* of Joy in us, which is wont, for the present, to be more powerfully and sensibly excited by some sudden and unexpected Good-tidings, than by the consideration of greater Good, which we have the continued possession of. So here the *Conversion* of a *Sinner*, especially of a *profligate* one, of whose *Repentance* there seem'd to be little hope, is an Event that we are therefore apt to be more strongly affected with; because 'tis so *unlookt for*, and as it were comes upon us by a wel-

6 Sermons, on the prodigal Son.

come surprize. For so many Righteous persons to persevere in their holy Course, is in it self more *valuable* and *considerable* : But this being no more than what may be reasonably expected from 'em, We are not so apt to be *transported* with it, as with the glad News of a *Sinner's Conversion*, whom we had in our own Apprehensions given up for *lost*. And here our Saviour speaks concerning the Joy of God and Holy Angels, on such an occasion, as if the *Motions* of it were *parallel* to ours. And to represent farther to 'em how *acceptable* and *pleasing* the *Conversion* of a *Sinner* was to the Blessed God Himself, He proposes this *Parable* of the *prodigal Son*. 'Tis indeed true, That our Saviour does by the *prodigal Son* more particularly point at those that were *sinners of the Gentiles*, and were by Divine Grace recover'd to *Repentance*; as by the *Elder Brother* he intends those froward and self-esteeming *Jews*, that Envied the Conversion of Gentile Sinners, and cou'd scarce bear to hear of their being made *fellow-heirs* with 'em of the *Promises of God*. As you may see in the *Acts* of the Apostles, with what Envy and Rage the *Jews* were fill'd, when
Paul

Sermons, on the prodigal Son. 7

Paul and Barnabas turn'd from them to the Gentiles, with the offers of that Salvation which they slighted; see Acts, 13. from the 46 v. to the End.

But the *Character* given of the *prodigal Son*, are such as do indifferently belong to every *Impenitent Sinner*, especially every *profligate one*, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, whether living *within* or *without* the *Pale* of the visible Church. And accordingly I shall in treating on this *Parable*, consider the *prodigal Son*, as the true *Emblem* of every *Unconverted Ungodly Sinner*.

Now in the *Parable* it self, we may take notice of these several Parts.

I. We have here an account of the *Folly of the prodigal Son*, in v. 11, 12, 13.

II. We have an account of the *Misery* he thereby reduc'd himself unto, v. 14, 15, 16.

III. We have the Relation of his *sincere Repentance and Return to his Father*.

IV. We have the *welcome Reception and Entertainment* he met with from his Father upon his penitent Return.

And at the End, There is an account of his *Father's just Expostulation with his Elder Brother*, who envy'd

8 Sermons, on the prodigal Son.

this kind Treatment that the returning Prodigal met with.

I now begin with the

I. The account we have here of the *Folly of the prodigal Son.*

'Tis said, *A certain Man had two Sons. And the younger of 'em said to his Father; Father give me the portion of Goods that falls to me: And he divided to 'em his Living.*

These Words do doubtless allude to the Custom, common then among Merchants and Trading people; that when their Children were grown up, were often wont to entrust 'em with a certain portion of Goods and Merchandize to traffick with, allowing 'em to make the best Advantage of it by their own Industry and Management. And 'tis this the *Younger Son* requested of his *Father*: And the Request being in it self no way unreasonable, the *Father* readily complies with it, by dividing his *Living* (or *Substance*) between 'em, or so much of it as it was reasonable for them to expect. And had the *Younger Son*, when he received his Portion, Traded with it under his *Fathers* Inspection, and his prudent Advice and Conduct; 'Tis probable we might have
heard

Sermons, on the prodigal Son. 9

heard a good account of him. But on the contrary we read, *That not many days after,* (so eager and impatient was he to put his Mad projects in Execution) *he gathered all together, and took his journey into a far Country, and there wasted his substance with riotous Living,* v. 13.

Now in Treating on this part of the *Parable*, It will be very proper to consider, what there is in the *Condition* and the *Course* of an *Impenitent sinner*, that is answerable to the *Case* and the *practise* of the *prodigal Son* in the Text: For from the *parallel* between 'em, we must deduce proper *Observations* for our *Instruction*.

Now by comparing 'em together, we may observe;

I. *That we have a portion of Goods allowed us by our Heavenly Father, to be Improv'd for our own Advantage and Welfare.*

II. *Herein every Unconverted sinner betrays his wretched Folly, That he affects to live at the greatest distance from his Heavenly Father, that he may more freely indulge his sensual Lusts, and spend his portion in riotous Living.*

III. *That*

10 *Sermons, on the prodigal Son.*

III. *That while the Unconverted sinner can go on undisturbed in this vicious Course, he rarely entertains the least thought of returning to God.*

IV. From this being the practise of the *Younger Brother*, we may infer, *that young persons are especially prone to run into such foolish and vicious courses as these.*

Of these in their Order.

I. From the *Father's* dividing his *Living* between the two *Brothers*, we may observe, *that we have every one of us a portion of Goods entrusted with us by our Heavenly Father, to be Improv'd for our own Advantage and welfare.*

For this was common to *Both* the *Sons*, *Each* had his *Portion* assign'd when their *Father* divided his *Living* between 'em.

So we have *All*, (whether *Good* or *Bad*, whether *Righteous* or *Wicked*,) our *Portion* assign'd us; which if we us'd due *Prudence* and *Care*, *Fidelity* and *Diligence* in the *Improvement* of, it wou'd turn to infinitely beneficial account.

We have all of us the same reasonable *Nature*, and the same intellectual *Powers*. We have *Understandings* capable

Sermons, on the prodigal Son. 21

pable of being Enrich'd with that Divine Knowledge that will make us *wise to Salvation*. We have *Wills* capable of a happy Conformity to the Will of God, capable of choosing him for our rightful Lord, and our Sovereign Happiness and Good. We have *active powers* capable of that faithful Service to him here, which will according to his gracious Promise entitle us to an Eternal and glorious Reward. We have Souls capable to Know, to Adore, to Love, to Obey, to Imitate the Blessed God, and to enjoy consummate Blessedness in his immediate Presence for ever. In a word, we have Souls capable of being adorn'd with Divine Grace here, and crown'd with Eternal Glory.

And we do not want suitable *Advantages* and *Helps* for Improving these noble *Capacities* for so excellent purposes. We have manifold Advantages of *Instructions* to inform our Judgments. We have the most powerful *Motives* and *Arguments* set before us, to win over our Hearts to God, and to his Service; and we have the most plain and clear *Directions* in our Duty, and highest *Encouragements* to it. We want no needful
Means

12 Sermons, on the prodigal Son.

Means to engage us in the ways of God, and to promote our progress and perseverance therein, in order to our attaining that final Salvation and Happiness, which is the End of our Faith and Hope, and shou'd be the principal scope of all our Endeavours.

Nay, we have manifold *Additional Talents* committed to us, the faithful and industrious Improvement whereof would bring us in the most unspeakable Advantage and Gain. We have much precious *Time* to be carefully Redeem'd; many *Opportunities of Doing*, as well as *Receiving Good*, to be observ'd and laid hold upon. We have various *Gifts* to be diligently us'd, and some of us, *worldly Riches and Treasures* to be lay'd out for the Glory and Service of God in *this World*, in order to the securing to our selves incomparably more valuable *Returns* in a *better*.

And to add no more, Our Heavenly Father is most ready to assist us by his *Spirit and Grace*, so to improve this Portion of Goods we are now entrusted with, as shall render our final Account of it joyful, and the Reward of our Integrity and Diligence, unconceivably
Great

Sermons, on the prodigal Son. 13

Great and Glorious : As doubtless, if the *prodigal Son* had continued with his *Father*, he wou'd by his prudent Advice, have prevented his Extravagancy, and the consequent misery it brought upon him. In a word, Our Heavenly Father is not awanting to us, in giving us what is needful and conducive to our greatest and Eternal welfare, if we be not grossly awanting to our selves.

All the *Use* I shall make of this Observation, shall be partly to remind you of your great Obligations to the Divine Goodness and undeserved Grace, that has entrusted all of us with so liberal a Portion of Goods, capable of being Improved to so incomparable Advantage, even for the securing our endless Felicity : And partly to excite your serious Concern to improve it aright ; since if you do not, you'll be inexcusable, and have nothing to lay the blame of your own Misery on, but your own Perverseness and wilful Folly. God has committed to all of us more or less of valuable *Talents*, and it must be owing to our inexcusable Negligence and Wickedness, if our due Management of 'em do not secure to us a happy Entrance in-
to

14 *Sermons, on the prodigal Son.*

to our *Master's Joy*. He has put into our Hands a plentiful *Stock*, which if we use well, our *gain* will be unspeakable. But if we either thro' our Sloth improve it not, or thro' our extravagancy squander it away, we have none to complain of but our selves, and shall be found speechless when our Lord shall call us to an account.

But because this is only presuppos'd in the *Parable*, I shall insist no longer thereon, but proceed to the

III^d Observation, from this part of the *Parable*, viz. *Herein every Unconverted sinner betrays his Folly, that he affects to live at the greatest distance from God, that he may more freely Indulge his sensual Lusts.*

Thus the first Thing that the *prodigal Son* does, after he had gather'd all together, was to take a Journey into a far Country, where he shou'd be from under his *Father's Eye and Inspection*, from under his *Authority and Government*, and out of the reach of his unwelcome *Admonitions and Reproofs* : And being thus far enough from his *Father*, he takes his swing, lays the Reins on the neck of his Lusts, and spends his substance in riotous Living. And

Sermons, on the prodigal Son. 15

And herein his *practise* and *Course* is exactly copied out by every *Ungodly Impenitent sinner*.

First, Every such Unconverted Sinner *departs from God*, and *affects to live at the greatest distance from him*.

'Tis true indeed, he cannot altogether so depart from God, as this *prodigal Son* did from his earthly *Father*. The Sinner can go no where from the *Essential presence* of his Heavenly Father, and can live no where from under the *Inspection* of his *Omniscient Eye*. We can never free our selves from the *Obligation* of his *Authority* and *Laws*, and much less can we go out of the reach of his *Rebukes*, or of his *avenging Justice*.

But yet every Unconverted Sinner, does, as far as in him lyes, *alienate himself*, and *depart from the Blessed God*.

'Tis true, he can go no where out of his *presence*, and from under the notice and observation of his *All-seeing Eye* : But yet he goes as far as he can. For he wilfully turns his Back to God, and lives in continual forgetfulness of him. 'Tis the secret Language of his Heart; *There is no God*, or at least his *Wish*, *That there were none*, *Psal. 14. 1. God*

16 *Sermons, on the prodigal Son.*

is not in all his Thoughts, Pf. 10. 4. He does his utmost to banish him thence, and rase out the sense and Impression of his Being out of his Mind. Or if those Thoughts do at any time offer themselves, or are by the Word or Providence of God, as it were forc'd upon his Soul; he is extreamly uneasy under 'em, and restless 'till he has shaken 'em off. He is well contented to *live without God in the World* : And how open soever God's Eyes are on the miserable Sinner, he wilfully *closes* his from beholding so unwelcome and Object. And no wonder that he shou'd be so averse to think of him; the very Thoughts of whom remind him of his Guilt, and administer matter of Terror and Dread to his alarmed Conscience and trembling Heart. There is no more of Intercourse or Converse on his part between him and God, by daily Meditation and secret Prayer, &c. than it indeed he were at the greatest distance imaginable from him. 'Tis the very Language of his Heart to God, *Depart from me, Job 21. 14.*

'Tis true, he can live no where from under the *Obligation* of God's *Authority* and *Laws* : But yet he does withdraw his

his neck from his Government, and departs from him by refusing Obedience to his Commands. He has no Inclination to observe his Laws (which he looks upon as an intollerable Yoke) and therefore is not very desirous or solicitous to understand, and much less to consider 'em, and Meditate upon 'em. He is resolv'd to live as he list, and to walk *after the Imagination of his own heart, and in the way of his own Eyes*, and therefore does not trouble himself with any anxious Enquiries about the Will of God; whom he is little concern'd to honour or please.

Indeed his whole Life is a continued deviation from the holy perfect Laws of God, to which he has little regard in his *Actions*, and much less in his daily *Words* and *Thoughts*. What are the continual Motions of his Soul, but a continued Scene of *Atheistical, Irreligious, Impure, Envious, Malicious, Revengeful, Covetous, Ambitious, Proud*, or at best *vain Thoughts* and *Desires*? And how does the impure *Fountain* of his *Heart* pour out those polluted *Streams* that daily defile his

B

Lips

18 *On the Parable of the*

Lips and Life. Alas! whether God approve or disapprove, accept or abhor his Actions is none of his serious Care. He affects to live without any controul or uneasy Restraints from his Authority and Commands, and is very willing that God and he may have nothing to do with one another. 'Tis the secret Language of his Heart; *What is the Almighty that I should serve Him?* Job 2. 15.

'Tis true indeed, He cannot live out of the reach of God's paternal *Admonitions* and *Rebukes*, nor out of the Reach of his *Avenging Justice* :

But yet he goes as far from him as he can. He stops his Ears against all his Gracious Counsels and needful Reproofs. He flights his compassionate Admonitions and Warnings. He either does not believe 'em, or does not ponder and regard 'em. He endeavours to stifle the Convictions, and to silence the faithful Remonstrances of his own Conscience, when it acts the part of God's *Deputy* in his Bosom. He can go no where, but where God can find and call him to an account : But yet he

Serm. I. *Prodigal Son.* 19

he lives in a Wilful and stupid Inconsideration of that awful Reckoning; and in his presumptuous Thoughts endeavours to *put away that Evil Day far from him*. He acts as if he were Accountable to no higher Tribunal, and were not under the jealous Eye of his Impartial Judge. He cannot go out of the reach of God's avenging Arm; but yet he is as *secure* as if he had no such tremendous Justice to dread; and is as insensible of his Danger from it, as if he were easily able either to *escape* or *resist*, or at least to *bear* it. He Lives as if he had nothing to fear from him, notwithstanding his innumerable Provocations of him. In a word, he Lives as if he had less to do with God than with all the World.

Nay, I may add under this Head, That the *Prodigal* when he had got his Portion into his own Hands, did, by going *into a far Country*, shew how little regard he had for his *Father's Affection* and *Love*, his *Company* and *Converse*; and how little he valued the *Entertainment* and *Provision* of his House. So does every Unconverted

Sinner in his Estrangement from God, expresse a wretched *contempt* of his paternal *Favour* and *Affection*. He shews how little he desires his Presence, how unwilling he is to keep up any dutiful *Converse* with him; how backward to *draw nigh to him*; and how much more pleased with his distance from him: Nay, he hereby manifests, how much he under-values all the privileges of his Family, and flights all the plentiful *Entertainments* of his House; and how little he regards any farther hopes from his future kindness. He is content with his *Inheritance in present possession*, and willing to forego his claim to any *Inheritance in Reversion*. He is desirous to go with the *Prodigal*, where, if possible; his *Father* and he might never hear from or of one another.

And as every Unconverted Sinner does resemble the *Prodigal* in this Instance of his Folly, His voluntary departure from his Father. So,

Secondly, He *does in this State of alienation from God, the more freely Indulge his sensual Lusts*.

As

As the *Prodigal* when he was got into a far Country out of his Father's sight, did then venture to *spend his substance in riotous Living*, i. e. in *Luxury and Pride*, in *Gluttony and Drunkenness*, in *Chambering and Wantonness*, in *Gaming and Revelling*; in a word, in all those *sensual Excesses* that either his own vitious *Inclinations*, or the wicked *Company* he haunted, cou'd prompt him to.

And indeed, in this many *Ungodly Impenitent Sinners* do *literally* trace the Steps of the *Prodigal* in my Text. In him the leud *Rakes* of the Age, may see their own Picture Drawn. Thus do they with him spend their Time, and *devour their Living* among their *Cups* and their *Harlots*, in the society of such jovial and wicked *Companions* as themselves. All they can get, goes to maintain their *pride*, and pamper their *Appetites*, and furnish their impure and excessive *Pleasures*; and to gratify their voluptuous and sensual *Inclinations*. And thus their Portion is soon spent in the *Tavern* or *Ale-House*, the *Play-House* or *Gaming-House*, or in the *Stews*: 'Tis quickly

made a Sacrifice to their Expensive Lusts, whose cravings are violent and insatiable, *Prov. 30. 15.* Like the *Prodigal* they make a quick dispatch of their accounts; and bring this at the foot of 'em, *all is spent.*

But tho' all Unconverted Sinners do not openly run into so extravagant Excess of Riot as this *Prodigal* did; yet, all of 'em in their State of Alienation from God, do give the swing more or less to their vicious Inclinations, and abuse the Portion of good Things he has entrusted 'em with, to the service of their Lusts. Those *Understandings* that God has given 'em for attaining Divine Knowledge and Wisdom, they employ about a thousand impertinent unconcerning Vanities. Those *Wills* and *Affections* he has given 'em, that they might choose and Love him, desire after and delight in him: They fix 'em on the despicable *Objects* of *Sense* and *time*; They give this vain *World* that supreme Interest in their Hearts that is due to *God*, and are *lovers of pleasure more than Lovers of him.* That *Vigour* and *Strength*, which they should em-

Serm. I. *Prodigal Son.* 23

employ in the diligent service of God, they spend in the eager restless pursuit of earthly Riches or Honours, and in the immoderate Cares of this perishing Life. That *time* they shou'd devote to God, is Engross'd by the *World* and the *Flesh*; wholly spent either in secular Business, or in Pastimes and Sports, in needless Visits and impertinent Discourses, in Romances and Plays, in Cards and Dice, and a thousand Follies; while God and their own Souls, and their everlasting Concerns stand by neglected and disregarded. Those very *Natural parts* that shou'd be Consecrated to God, by being Employed to recommend serious Religion, are rather perverted to spread the Contagion of Irreligion and Vice, in their profane and impious, their leud and unsavoury Discourses; in which, whatever may appear of *flashy Wit*, there is nothing of *solid Wisdom*: Nay; those *Estates* that God has given 'em to be laid out for his Glory and Interest, are either *hoarded up* to gratify their insatiable Avarice, or *perverted* from their true Use, by being squander'd away to maintain their

their Luxury and Pride, as if they were ambitious of the Rich Man's Character, *To be cloathed in purple and fine Linen, and to fare sumptuously every Day,* Luke 16. 19.

Thus the *Unconverted Sinner* having departed from God, *walks in the ways of his own Heart, and after the sight of his own Eyes.* Having no solicitous Thoughts to *please him*, he studies only to *please himself.* Having cast off all regard to the Laws of God, he makes his own *Humour and Inclination*, his own corrupt and misguided *Will*, his only *Law and Rule.* Having no serious sense of the Presence and All-seeing Eye of God, his sinful Appetites and Passions, his brutish, his sensual and worldly Lusts have little check or restraint but what may be laid upon 'em by the penalties of human Laws, or the awe of Earthly Superiors. The Great God being banish'd out of their Minds and Hearts, Sin and Folly usurp his Throne, and Reign uncontroll'd there. Having broke off from God, they become an easy Prey to Satan, who quickly Gains and keeps the Possession of

Serm. I. *Prodigal Son.* 25

of 'em. Being now far off from God; (as to any serious Thoughts, or to any reverential dread of him) they securely run with a sinful World into the common Excess of Riot, and join with them in fulfilling the Lusts of the Flesh and the Mind, Eph. 2. 3.

But,

III. I farther observ'd, *That while the Unconverted sinner can go on undisturbed in his vitious Course, 'tis hard to bring him to any serious Thoughts of returning to God.*

Thus, while the *Prodigal* had any thing left to spend upon his *Harlots* and *Cups*, while he had wherewith to *rant* and *revel*, and maintain this leud way of Living, we hear not one word concerning his Father; no sense of his Folly in departing from him; no Resolution of returning to him.

And, alas! the Case is much the same with the generality of *Ungodly, Unconverted Sinners*, especially with more open and profligate ones. While they are engaged in the eager and violent pursuit of their Lusts, and can make provision to fulfil 'em, There is
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26 *On the Parable of the*

comparatively but little hope of reclaiming 'em. Alas! they are not at leisure in the hurry of Business, or in the tumult of their Lusts to attend to the Dictates and Checks of their own Conscience, or, the Voice of Conscience is drown'd in the noise of their jovial Company. They do as it were barrall Access of the Holy Spirit of God to their *Hearts*, by refusing to *Commune* in secret with 'em. And, alas! how little wou'd his Admonitions be regarded in the midst of their merry Entertainments, their *Musick* or their *Wine*, their *Balls* and *Dances*, their *Pastimes* and *Sports*? There's no place for the serious Thoughts of God in the *Tavern* or *Ale-House*, the *Play-House*, or *Gaming-House*; those must be chiefly expected in our *Closets*, and our serious *Retirements* there, to which such Sinners are usually entire and woful Strangers. There's no probable means of Reclaiming 'em, but either by the *Word* or the *Providence* of God. For his *Word*, they are so wont to bring a careless and unattentive Mind to it, nay to *trifle* and *toy*, to *talk* and *laugh* when
they

they shou'd hear it, that 'tis no wonder it leaves no Impression on their Minds; or if it did, alas, how quickly is it ras'd out by their running into Company and Diversions, instead of retiring into their Closets. And therefore God does usually make use of the severe Methods of his Providence to set Home the Admonitions of his Word. (of which more hereafter)

IV. From this being mention'd as the practise of the *younger Brother*, we may observe, *That young persons are especially prone to run into such Folly and Extravagancy.*

In that *Age*, their carnal *Appetites* and *Lusts* are usually strong, and those *sensual pleasures* that are suitable to 'em, carry Charms that are not easily resisted. Their *Judgments* are not then matur'd by Consideration and Experience. Young persons are impatient of any restraint and check upon their *sinful Inclinations*; and are fond of what they mistake for desirable Liberty, I mean the freedom of doing what they list. Their *Senses* are quick and vigorous, and have a strong relish of agreeable Objects; so
that

that the *Temptations* of this defiling world have great Advantage over 'em, and seldom miss of prevailing, if they are not carefully kept out of the road of 'em. Nay, *young persons* are apt to think, that some Allowance must be made for their green Years; and think 'tis no great Crime for them to take their swing and try the World: So little are they apprehensive of their *Folly* in it, and so little do they foresee the *mischievous consequences* of it.

I shall close this Discourse on the first Branch of the Text, by making a few practical Reflections on the foregoing Observations. And;

I. Does every *Unconverted Sinner* betray his own *Folly* in his living at a distance from God, and indulging his sensual Lusts? Then let me hence urge every such impenitent Sinner to consider the folly of his practice.

Who they are that do thus depart from God, and give the swing to their vicious Inclinations, you may see in the Description already given of 'em, which I need not repeat.

Now

Now that I may convince all such *Prodigals* of their extreme *Folly*, I shall only desire 'em to consider;

1. *That the Distance and Estrangement from God which you affect, is not only most unreasonable in it self, but is your own greatest Infelicity.*

'Tis most *Unreasonable* in it self.

Any one might have told the *prodigal Son*, that it was most reasonable he shou'd continue in his Father's Family, and manage his Concerns under his watchful Eye and prudent Direction; and that it was no way advisable for a raw unexperienc'd Youth to venture himself into a *far Country*.

But, 'tis far more *Unreasonable* for you to depart from your Heavenly Father, and affect to live at a distance from him; for you have really infinitely more to do with him, than with all the World besides. You absolutely depend on his daily Power and Goodness, for the Preservation of your Lives, and the continuance of all the Comforts thereof. You have infinitely more to hope from his Favour, and to fear from his Displeasure, than from all the World's

30 *On the Parable of the*

World's. He is like to be your most *desirable Friend, or dreadful Enemy*. He is the *Witness* and *Judge* of your Actions, by whose irreversible Sentence your Eternal State must be Determin'd. And is this the *God* whom you *flee from*, and are so desirous to have nothing to do with? Alas! you have concerns of infinite moment and consequence to transact with him: And is it reasonable then that you shou'd banish him as much as possible out of your Minds, and shun all serious Converse with him?

Nay consider, This your voluntary Distance from God, is your *greatest Infelicity*.

To be doom'd to *depart from God for Ever*, is the compendious sum of the *Misery* of the *Damned*, and will you already begin to inflict that *Curse* upon your Selves? To a holy Soul, the serious Thoughts of God are the spring of the highest Satisfaction and Delight; they are the sweetest Entertainment and Solace to his Mind, and capable to allay its bitterest Sorrows. What then does the miserable *Sinner* in shutting God out of his Thoughts, but expose
his

his own Soul to the most *disconsolate Darkneß*. Of which the *Sinner* may observe this one convincing Evidence; that he who is *unwilling to think of God*, is *afraid of Conversing with his own Soul*; nay, *afraid of his own serious and retired Thoughts*. And can we think that Man any other but miserable that is afraid to look *within*, and to *commune with his own Heart*? That is forc'd to seek Ease and Freedom from Terrors and Fears, by fleeing from himself, and from his own Thoughts? For indeed, we can scarce be *alone and considerate*, but the thoughts of God will offer themselves to our Minds: And is that Man's Condition desirable to whom those Thoughts are a continual *Terror*, instead of being a *Delight*?

Again, What is it to be under the *Government and Laws* of God, but like a *Child's* being under his *Father's* prudent *Counsel and Direction*, who will advise him the best for his own welfare. And if the *Laws* of God be no other than the *wise and Compassionate Counsels* of our *Heavenly Father*, directing us in the way to our true Eternal Blessedness.

ness, What greater Mischief can we do our selves than to *turn a deaf Ear* to 'em! Alas! to be left to our *own Will*, as our only *Guide*, is like a raw *Youth* being left in a most important *Affair* to his own *giddy Counsels*; or like a *Ship* to be in a very hazardous *Voyage*, left to the conduct of an *ignorant hair-brain'd Pilot*! Alas! for us to forsake him, is only to change *Masters*: To cast off his *Yoke* is in effect to put on the *Devils Chains*: And to reject that *service* of God, which is our truest *Liberty*, is to become *Vassals* to Satan, whose *work* and *wages* are very *suitable*; the one *ignominious*, and the other *terrible*.

2. Consider, *That the free gratification of your sensual Lusts, which you aim at in your voluntary departure from God, is really the greatest mischief and injury that you can do to your selves.*

'Tis but a continued Attempt to debase your own Nature, and sink your selves as low, or lower than the *Beasts that perish*. 'Tis a compliance with the Counsel of your worst *Enemies*, in opposition to the warnings of your truest *Friends*. Every sensual Lust you indulge,

Serm. I. *Prodigal Son.* 33

indulge, you give Conscience a deep Wound, you sow new Seeds of Anguish and Horror in your own guilty Minds, you incense the Wrath of an Almighty God, and expose yourselves to his Eternal Vengeance: And do you call this desirable *Liberty*, to be free only to *debase*, to *stab*, to *undo* and *destroy* your selves? Methinks 'tis an affecting Description that the Wiseman gives of such a young *Prodigal*, when he represents him overcome by the alluring Insinuations of the impudent *Prostitute*, when he saith; *With her much fair Speech, she caus'd him to yield, With the flattering of her Lips, she forced him. He goes after her straightway as an Ox goes to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks; 'Till a Dart strike thro' his Liver; as a Bird hasteth to the Snare, and knows not 'tis for its Life; see Prov. 7. 21, 22, 23.* Such a stupid and sottish Wretch is the *Licentious Sinner*; with such amazing folly is he hurried on in the pernicious paths of Sin; and so blindly but eagerly does he pursue his own Destruction. But

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of

18 On the Parable of the

of this I shall have occasion to speak more fully afterwards, both under the 2d and 3d Branches of the Parable.

But, II. Is it so hard to bring an Impetent Sinner to serious Thoughts of returning to God, while he goes on undisturbed in his vicious Course; O let none then venture upon such a vaines Course, upon a vain presumption that they'll leave it again when they come to maturer Age.

And, I the rather suggest this caution because young Persons are apt, I know not why, to plead a privilege, and think they may be allow'd to take their swing for a while, designing, but they know not when, to take up, and entertain wiser Thoughts and Counsels. But alas, how little do such understand or consider the Corruption of human Nature, and the danger of being hardned thro' the deceitfulness of Sin? How little do they foresee the difficulty of conquering vicious Habits, when rivetted by customary practise? Jer. 13. 23. How little do they think, how hard

Serm. I. *Prodigal Son.* 35

is to *dispossess* the *Strong Man Arm'd*, when he has once Establish'd his Interest by long Possession! How little do they consider the difficulty of recovering Conscience to any tender Sense, after so much has been done to *stupidify* and *fear* it? How little do they think of the danger of being entirely abandoned by the Spirit of God after long resistance, and given up to judicial Blindness and Obduracy? How little do they consider how *steep* and *easy* a Descent the Road of *Hell* is, but how difficult and painful it will be to *retreat*, and climb up to the *path* of the *Just* that is *on High*! We see nothing but extremity of Misery brought the Prodigal to himself. And God is not oblig'd to use such *extraordinary means* for every *Sinners* Conversion: And perhaps yourselves like not this way of being reclaimed. O then prevent the *Prodigal's* Misery, by avoiding his *Folly*, instead of venturing upon his *Folly* upon a most *uncertain* prospect of the like happy *Conversion*. 'Tis far better, *not to depart* from our Father's Family, than to be *brought back* by extream distress, especially

cially when we consider how few that do depart do return; and how few comparatively of those that run into the *Prodigal's Folly and Excess*, do indeed imitate his *Repentance*. We cannot say, *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*, but we may say, *Vestigia rara retrorsu*. And we may upon the Authority of an Inspired Writer, deliver it as an Observation at least generally True, concerning such lewd *Prodigals*; And, O that all of you would look upon it as an awful Warning, *None that go to her (speaking of the Whorish Woman) return again; neither do they take hold of the paths of Life, Prov. 2. 19.*

3 NOS3.

FINIS.

On the Parable of
The Prodigal.



SERM. II.

LUKE, Chap. VI.

From Vers. the 11th, to the 24th.

Vers. 11. *And he said, A certain Man
had two Sons,*

12. *And the younger of 'em said to his Fa-
ther. Father, give me the Portion of Goods that
falls to me : And he divided unto 'em his Li-
ving.*

13. *And not many Days after, the younger
Son gathered all together, and took his Journey
into a far Country, and there wasted his Sub-
stance with riotous living.*

C 3

14. *And*

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land, and he began to be in want.

15. And he went and joined himself to a Citizen in that Country, and he sent him into his Fields to feed Swine.

16. And he wou'd fain have filled his Belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat; And no Man gave unto him.

17. And when he came to himself, he said; How many hired Servants of my Father's House have Bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with Hunger! &c. —

HAVING in the former Discourse spoken concerning the Folly of the prodigal Son, I now proceed to Consider.

II. The account which this Parable gives us of the Misery to which the prodigal Son was reduc'd by his own Folly.

And of that we read in the end of the 13, 14, 15 and 16 v.

He wasted his Substance in riotous Living; and when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in the Land, and he began to be in want, and he went and join'd himself to a Citizen in that Country, who sent him into his Fields to feed swine

Serm. II. Prodigal Son. 39

Swine, and he would fain have filled his Belly with the husks which the Swine did Eat, and no Man gave unto him, &c.

Now if we compare the Case of the prodigal Son, with that of an Unconverted ungodly Sinner, we shall find, That the one is Parallel to the other, in such particulars as these.

I. That the course of every Impenitent ungodly sinner, like that of the Prodigal, leads to Misery and Ruin; and if their Repentance prevent not, is like to end therein.

II. That the ungodly Sinner will usually rather bear any hardships in his sinful Course, than think of returning to God, and is usually only brought to it by Extremity.

III. That therefore a wise and gracious God does often see meet to use such severe Methods to awaken him to Repentance.

Of these in their Order: And,

I. The course of every ungodly Impenitent Sinner (like that of the Prodigal in the Text) leads to nothing but Misery and Ruin; and if his Repentance prevent not, will certainly end therein. C 4. You

You see the *Prodigal* had not long had his *portion of Goods* in his own *Management*, he had not spent much time in that *far Country*, from under his *Fathers prudent Eye*, and *tender Care*, but we have a short and sad *Account*, that he had quickly *wasted his Substance*; *All was spent*. His *Prodigality* first made him a *Beggar*, and then a *Slave*, and then he was upon the point of *perishing for Want*.

To the like *Calamitous* and *Forlorn* Condition will that vile and pernicious Course that every *Ungodly Sinner* takes, sooner or later lead him : He can expect nothing but *Misery* and *Destruction* as the *Issue* of it.

But that I may draw the *Parallel* as near as possible, I shall shew :

I. That the *Course of Ungodly sinners*, especially those that are *profligately vitious*, does often lead, even to such *temporal Misery and Ruin*, as the *Prodigal* here reduc'd himself to.

II. That however that be, the *Course of every such Ungodly sinner*, does tend to his *Spiritual and Eternal Ruin and Misery*, and without *Repentance* will end therein.

I. The

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 41

I. *The course of Ungodly sinners, especially such as are profligately vicious, does usually tend even to such Temporal Misery and Ruin, as the Prodigal reduc'd himself to.*

When leud Sinners do in the strictest Sense, copy the *Prodigal* in his Licentious Extravagant course of Life; 'tis very common to see 'em reduc'd very soon into the same *Deplorable Circumstances*, to the same extreme poverty and want, to the same *Abject* and *Despicable* condition of *Servitude*. So that, as the Rakes of the Age, see in him a lively *Exemplar* of their own *Folly* and *Madness*; so they may (to compleat the Picture) in his *wretched Condition*, see a very instructive Emblem of the woful *Issue* and *End* they are hastning to.

Now that the Course of Ungodly profligate Sinners, does often lead to such *Temporal Misery* and *Ruin*, will appear, if we consider, either the Natural tendency of it, or if we consider, how often the Divine Providence concurs in the infliction of such Penal Evils.

I. The

I. The course of Ungodly profligate Sinners, does usually lead to such Temporal Misery, *by the natural tendency of Things themselves:*

And this will appear if we consider, how often the *Vices* of such Profligate Sinners have a *natural tendency* to expose 'em to Poverty and Want, to Ignominy and Shame, to Diseases or Death.

The *vices* of profligate Sinners, have often a natural tendency to expose 'em to poverty and want.

Nature is contented with a little Expence, in order to its comfortable Sustainance and Support.

But the Lusts of Men are usually very *Expensive*, and as insatiable in their Cravings as the *Grave*, that never says, *It is enough*. The *Hunger* and *Thirst* of a regular Appetite are easily satisfy'd upon cheap and reasonable Terms; but the *unruly Appetite* of the *Glutton* and the *Drunkard* (that is as curious about the *Quality*, as excessive in the *Quantity* of Meats and Drinks, and will not be satisfy'd without the Choicest dainties or strongest Liquors, and a very plentiful measure of 'em

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 43

too) such an Appetite as this, is a very costly thing to maintain, and if a Man's Purse be not very deep, will soon bring him to the Bottom of it. No wonder that the *Prodigal's Substance* was soon *wasted in riotous Living*; and that when his Luxurious Expences to pamper his Flesh so far exceeded his Income, we quickly hear, *He had spent all.* And thus does many a Sot, in a short time squander away in the *Ale-House* and *Tavern*, what shou'd have been a lasting *Stock and Fund* for his own or Families Subsistence. 'Twas the Wife-Man's Observation of old, *That the Drunkard and the Glutton shall come to Poverty.* And therefore he Cautions his Son that he shou'd not be among *Wine-bibbers, and riotous Eaters of Flesh*, Prov. 23. 20, 21. He had need of a large Estate that does with the *Rich Sensualist*, *fare Sumptuously every day.*

And the Profligate Sinner's *Intemperance*, does the more hasten his Temporal Ruin, when 'tis accompany'd with that other *Vice* it so Naturally leads to, viz. That of *Uncleanness and Brutish Lust.* The Conversation of proud
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44 *On the Parable of the*

wanton Harlots, soon devoured all the poor *Prodigals* living; the Demands of their *Vanity* and their *Luxury*, being usually as *Extravagant* and *Insatiable* as those of their *Lust*. And alas! How many a Man's unruly Lust has brought a speedy Consumption upon his *Purse*, as well as his *Body*? How many a Man has found by sad Experience what the Wise Man had in vain warn'd him of, *That the Whorish Women has brought him to a piece of Bread*, Prov. 6. 26.

And then for that *Vanity* and *Pride* that makes Men affect to go above their Condition and Rank in the World in their *Garb*, in their *Furniture*, in their *Equipage* and *Attendance*, and other Expences for Pomp and Ostentation, How costly a Sin is it? and how quickly does it consume his Stock? How soon does it usually sink him as much below his former *Equals*, as he before aspir'd to live above 'em, by reducing him to miserable *Debts* or *Straits*. So that his towering *Pride*, is usually the Fore-runner of a shameful *Fall*; and ends in *Beggary*, or in a *Jail*.

And

THE CONCLUSION

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Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 45

And to this sin of *Pride* I may join that of *Idleness*, that so often attends it. And of that the Wiseman's Observation is just; that the *talk of the Lips tends only to penury*; and that *drowsiness cloths a Man with rags*. See also his lively Description of the *Sluggards Field*, Prov. 14. 23. Prov. 19. 15. Prov. 25. 2. Prov. 24. 30. &c.

And least such *Vices* as these shou'd not consume the young *Prodigal's* Estate fast enough : There's one more that he's often adicted to, that commonly makes much quicker dispatch, and often like Gun-Powder blows him up in a trice. I mean that of *excessive Gaming*. And how many a voluptuous and silly Youth is thus fool'd out of his Substance by cunning Rooks, and left by 'em to exclaim against his own *hard Fortune*, when he shou'd exclaim against his own *Madness* and *Folly*, that wou'd venture his All upon the throw of a *Dye*, or rather put it into the hands of *cheating Gamesters*.

In a word, Any one of these *Vices* alone is very capable to impoverish the profligate Sinner, and to reduce him to the

the last degree of Necessity and Want, and has a natural tendency thereto; and much more when many or all of 'em concur to hasten and compleat his ruin. And the Examples of such licentious *Prodigals*, whom their Excess of Riot has brought into such a Condition of indigence and Misery, are so many and so frequent in every Age, that 'tis a wonder that they serve so little for the warning of Others. And that so few profligate Sinners will grow wise in time at *others cost*, or will learn the woful issue and consequence of such folly from any other Teacher but their own unhappy and sorrowful *Experience*. But, alas! Experience comes too late, when *all is spent*; and when poverty and straits come upon 'em with an irresistible Violence, like an armed Man, Prov. 24. ult. And truly if we shou'd look among the miserably poor, we shou'd find comparatively few of 'em poor of *God's making*. Most owe their *Beggary* to their Sloth, or their *expensive Lusts*.

And as the profligate Sinner does often by his expensive Vices *wast his Estate*; so he takes the most effectual course

course to ruin his Reputation. For as degenerate as the State of the World is, yet Vice has never so far gain'd the Ascendant over Vertue, as to be reckon'd among Men's Titles of Honour. To be a Glutton or a Drunkard, an Adulterer or Whoremonger, a Gamester, or a Prodigal spend-thrift, are no Characters that any are desirous to be known by; how much soever they may be in Love with those vitious practices themselves. Even the commonness of Vice cannot wholly take off the just Odium of it: It will leave an indelible Brand on the Sinner's Memory. The Name of the Wicked shall Rot, Prov. 10. 7. And what the Wiseman speaks of one particular Vice, viz. That of Filthy Lust, may be applied to most others, that he who makes it his Practice, A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his Reproach shall not be wip'd away, Prov. 6. 33.

Nor is it unusual for such Profligate Sinners, by their Intemperance and Lust, to lay the foundation of those diseases that render their Bodys as noysome as their defiled Souls; that make their Lives Miserable, and hasten their untimely Death.

How

48. *On the Parable of the*

How many such leud Wretches are there, that dye *Martyrs* in the *Devil's Cause*, either by Sacrificing their Health and Life to their unruly Appetites and excessive Debauchery's ; or by those *Duels* that the heat of Wine and Rage hurries 'em to ; or by those *Crimes*, in order to the maintaining their Riotous Course, that bring 'em to a shameful End, as Examples of Publick Justice.

Thus does the Profligate Sinner often ruin himself in this World.

But,

2. Besides this *Natural tendency* of the profligate Sinners course to make him *Miserable here*. *The Divine Providence* does often concur in the *Inflation* of such penal Evils on him.

This was the Prodigal's Case ; his *Expensive Lusts* soon wasted his Living ; but in Order to the increasing his Straits, and reducing him to the greater Extremity, 'Tis said, *There arose a mighty Famine in that Land*. A Just Providence conspir'd to heighten his *Punishment*, and make him feel the more the bitter *Effects* of his own *Riot* and *Folly*.

Folly. His own *Extravagance* spent all wherewith he should have reliev'd himself, and the *Famine* cut off in a great Measure all hope of relief from the *Charity* and *Compassion* of others. And this made his Condition look the more Forlorn and Desperate. None can doubt, but that 'tis a very Righteous thing with an offended God to Strip such profligate Sinners even of those Temporal common Blessings which they so Prodigally abuse and Sacrifice to their own Lusts. 'Tis but just, that he who squanders away his Substance in Riotous Living, among his *Cups* and his *Harlots*, shou'd come to know the Worth of God's abused Mercies, by the want of 'em, and shou'd be brought to that severe Necessity of *begging a morsel of Bread*. Such extreme *Indigence* and *Want* is but the deserved Fruit of such luxurious *Prodigality* and *Wast*. And the wise Providence of God does often so order Things, that such Sinners may evidently read their *Crime* in their *Punishment*, and discern their *Folly* in the present mischievous *Consequence* of it. As the *Prodigal* might easily do, when from excessive and abused *Plenty*,

he was reduc'd to such a *Famishing Condition*; when he that us'd to satisfy his Appetite with the most costly dainties, is brought to that miserable Case, that he would fain have fill'd his Belly with the husks which the Swine did eat, and no Man gave unto him. Thus Fools because of their Transgression, and because of their Iniquity are Afflicted: Thus they even here often eat the Fruit of their own doings; and are fill'd with their own Devices, Ps. 107. 17. Prov. 1. 31.

But because some Ungodly Sinners are not so Extravagant and Profligate in their vitious Courses, as to bring such Temporal Misery and ruin on themselves, but can so dexterously manage their Lusts, as to reconcile 'em in a tolerable measure with their worldly Interest. I therefore add:

II. That the course of every Unconverted and Ungodly Sinner, does at least tend to his Spiritual and Eternal Misery, and will without Repentance end therein.

'Tis true indeed, every Sinner does not by his vain and sensual Life reduce himself to beggary and want, to Bondage and Slavery. But he does expose himself to Evils and Miseries, far more

into

intolerable and dismal than these. Every ungodly Sinner squanders away that time; and those Talents which shou'd be improved for the glory of God, and for his own everlasting advantage and welfare. He does by becoming a voluntary Servant of Sin, become a miserable captive and prey of Satan; and as it were, *sells himself* to do all the vile Drudgery of that inperious and cruel Task-master. He does by choosing to live a brutish and sensual Life, *Herd* himself with the *Swine*, as if he were capable of no higher Interest or Happiness than the Beasts that perish. By choosing his Portion in this Life, he takes up with those vain Enjoyments of this World, which are as incapable to satisfy the desires of a reasonable Soul, as *Husks* are to satisfy an hungry Apperite. He contents himself with *empty shadows* instead of *solid Substantial Good*, and prefers *broken Cisterns* before the *Fountain of living Waters*. He does as it were turn *Fellow-commonner* with the *Swine*, aspiring to no higher Felicity than what is to be found in sensual Entertainments, and impure carnal Delights. And (what is yet more dreadful) he does hereby

alienate the heart of God from him ; he exposes himself to his just Abhorrence here, and to his terrible Vengeance for ever. He Sacrifices the Interests and Hopes of an Immortal Soul, to the momentary gratification of his worldly and fleshly Lusts : He barter away the *Pearl of price* for the *filth of Sin*, or the *dirt of this World* : He does by his repeated Neglects and Affronts of God, *treasure up more Wrath against the Day of VVrath* : He sows by every repeated Sin new *Seeds of Horror* in his own Conscience, and lays in more *Food* for the *Immortal VVorm*, and more *Fuel* for the *Unquenchable Fire*. In a word. he lives to no other purpose than to debase and pollute his own Soul ; to stab and wound his own Conscience ; to provoke the indignation of an Infinitely Holy and just God ; and to lay himself open to the Execution of all his terrible Threatnings : Nay, the farther Progress he makes in a sinful Course, he is thereby taking the larger steps, and making swifter Advances towards remediless endless Destruction. So justly does the VVise Man compare him while he goes on stupid and secure in his wickedness,

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 53

to the Ox going to the Slaughter, and to the Bird that hastens to the Snare, not knowing that 'tis for it's Life, Prov. 7. 21, 22, 23. His steps daily take hold of Hell; and his paths lead down to the Chambers of (Eternal) Death. So that without Repentance, remediless everlasting Misery will as certainly be the Ungodly Sinner's End, as to *perish for want*, had been the Prodigal's end, if he had not taken up a seasonable resolution of *returning to his Father*.

Nay as the *Prodigal* at last came to feel his own Misery, and saw himself *ready to perish*. So there will a time come, when the Ungodly Sinner shall be convinc'd of the deplorable Wickedness of his own Case, and see himself in danger of *Perishing for ever*.

His jovial and sensual Life will not always last; and if nothing bring him sooner to this Extremity and Distress, yet *Death* at least will certainly do it. That will give him a Miserable and sad prospect indeed of his forlorn Condition; and shew him what the woful Consequences of his past Folly are like to be. That will convince him, that he has by his Wicked and riotous Life,

54 *On the Parable of the*

not only wasted his *Temporal Substance*, but (which is unspeakably worse) he has lost his precious Soul, and thrown away his *Eternal Hopes*. That will demonstrate to him, that all his sinful Pleasures are *ended*, and his vain Hopes *expired*, and his dreams of sensual Happiness are *vanish'd*; and that now he has nothing before him, but what is incomparably worse than Poverty and want, even *remediless Vengeance* and *Misery*, *everlasting Perdition* and *Ruin*; the very thoughts whereof, are enough to swallow him up in *Horror* and *Despair*: For in this forlorn Condition, there appears no glimpse of Hope; no prospect of Redress and Relief. Of which more afterwards.

But,

II. I farther observ'd from the Words, *That Ungodly Sinners will usually choose rather to bear any hardships in their sinful Course; than entertain thoughts of returning to their Heavenly Father.*

It was thus with the poor Prodigal, in reference to his *Earthly Father*. When he had spent all, he found himself in pinching straits: And one wou'd think

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 55

think his first Reflection thereon shou'd
Awaken in him ingenuous Thoughts of
returning to his Father. From whom
had he more ground to expect Compas-
sion and Pity, than from him, notwith-
standing all his undutiful Carriage?
Sure then he'll apply himself first to him
for relief, and try what effect a penitent
Submission may have to move the Bow-
els of a tender Father towards him: No,
rather than do that, he'll *sell himself for*
a Slave; nay, he'll stoop to the meanest
and most ignominious Employment
of a *Swine-herd.* (an employment,
not only most Contemptible among the
Egyptians, who refus'd to admit such
to their Temples, and even the lower
sort of People disdain'd to contract any
affinity with 'em, as *Herodotus* tells us;
but even among the *Jews* themselves,
Swine being among them accounted
unclean Beasts.) Yet to this vile and
scandalous Office (as it was then E-
steem'd) will the foolish *Prodigal* ra-
ther debase himself than submit to his
Father; he'll rather be *another Man's*
slave in the *Fields*, than enjoy the free-
dom of a *Child* in his *Father's House*;
he'll rather stoop to the basest *Drudgery*

abroad, than have the most *honourable* and *easy Employment* at home; nay he'll rather choose to feed on *Husks* here, than to partake of the most plentiful Provision at his Father's Table: So that cou'd those *Husks* have fill'd his Belly, he had not thought of *returning Home*.

And how lively an Emblem is this of the unaccountable aversion of a revolted Sinner to return to God! How exactly does he herein resemble this foolish and perverse Prodigal! Even thus does he prefer the ignominious *Vassalage* of *Satan* and *Sin* before the desirable *Liberty of the Children of God*. Thus does he prefer the Pernicious and Restless *Drudgery* of his shameful and hateful Lusts, before that *Service of God*, which would be his highest honour and Happiness: Nay, thus does he prefer the *Husks* of impure and brutish Pleasures, that only leave a tormenting sting behind 'em, before all the rich *Entertainments of his Fathers House*; before all the solid and satisfying Joys of serious Religion. Thus does he voluntarily choose rather to live the *Life of a Bruit*, than the *Life of a Saint*. He wou'd

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 57

rather bear the shameful yoke of the Devil (the vilest Usurper, and the most rigorous Tyrant, whose commands are most unreasonable in themselves, and most pernicious to his own Interest) than bow his Neck to the gracious and right-ful yoke of his *Father's* Government. And indeed the Life of a Sinner is so ignominious a Servitude to base and detestable Lusts, and all the Wages of Sin here are such empty and unsatisfying husks (such meer shadows of pleasure instead of solid Joys) and the future Wages thereof are so certain deplorable Ruin, that we may well compare his choice to that of the *Prodigal*, that *sold himself to feed Swine*; and had no other reward for it, than to *feed on those Husks* that cou'd not preserve him from perishing with Hunger: And yet this the miserable Sinner thinks more eligible, than returning to his Heavenly Father. This he thinks *better than God's honourable Work and Service*; better than his *favour and gracious Acceptance*; better than the *joyful prospect and hope of his Eternal Rewards*. O the Blindness and Obstinacy of Sinners, whose hearts are possess'd with so unreasonable a Dis-inclination to the

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58 *On the Parable of the*

Blessed God, who seem so ready to choose rather to be Miserable in their woful Alienation and Distance from him, than truly happy in their Penitent return to him.

But,

III. I farther observ'd, That 'tis for this reason that a Wise God often sees meet to use such severe Methods to awaken and reclaim ungodly and especially profligate Sinners.

We see the *Prodigal* must be brought to *extremities*; he must be *ready to perish with Hunger*, and see no prospect of any that can or will minister to his Necessities, before he *comes to himself*. And this alone brings him to the consideration of his own folly.

And thus the Wise God often deals with profligate Sinners. He abandons 'em to the uncontrolled pursuit of their Lusts: Those soon bring 'em into grievous Necessities and Straits, plung 'em into Distress and Misery, and bring 'em to the very brink of *Temporal* as well as *Eternal Ruine*; and these dismal sensible Effects of their own Folly open their Eyes to see it, and bring 'em under deep Convictions of it. When they are thus
bound

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 59

bound in Fetters, and held in Cords of Affliction (especially of such affliction as they have visibly brought on themselves, and pull'd the *Fetters* and *Cords* of about their own Necks;) then he *shewes them their Work and their Transgression that they have exceeded.* He opens their *Ear to Discipline; and Commands that they return from Iniquity,* Job 36. 8, 9. &c.

Nay, 'tis the usual Method of God in the Conversion of all Ungodly Sinners, to bring 'em under serious and lively Convictions of those *woful Circumstances* into which they have plung'd themselves; of their spiritual Distresses and Dangers, of their forlorn and lost Condition, while they continue in a state of Distance and Alienation from him : And this makes 'em sensible of the absolute necessity of *returning to him.* But of that I may have occasion to speak more afterward.

It remains, That we make some *Improvement* of what has been already spoken : And,

I. Does the Course of every Unconverted Ungodly Sinner lead to nothing but *Misery and Ruin*, if his *Repentance* pre-

prevent not? Then let me *Expostulate* with such about the *Unreasonableness* of their wilful continuance therein.

Why will you wilfully take such cursed pains to ruin and undo yourselves?

Let me a little plead with you by Arguments, drawn from your *temporal* and your *Eternal Interest*.

Let me plead with you from your *temporal Interest*.

And truly for such *profligate* and *riotous Persons* as this *Prodigal* in my Text is represented to be, one wou'd think we shou'd need to use no other Arguments than this, if we had not to do with very *stupid* and *unthinking Creatures*. Alas! thou foolish *Spend-thrift* that art by thy *Intemperance* and *Lust*, thy *Revelling* and *Drunkenness*, thy *Chambering* and *Wantonness*, thy *Pride* and *Luxury*, thy *Gaming* and *expensive Sports*, spending upon the quick Stock, and by *Idleness* adding little or nothing to it; How long canst thou expect that this extravagant Life shou'd last? Such *costly Vices* will soon *exhaust* thy *Fund*, and *drain* thy *Coffers*. And thou must have very little *Sense* or *Sagacity* indeed, if thou dost not foresee *poverty* at this rate coming on thee as one that travels, and want as an armed Man. • The

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 61

The *Traveller* may seem at some distance now, but he comes on by *sure*, (tho' sometimes by *slower* and sometimes by *swifter*) Steps and he will come as an *armed Man*, against whom thou canst make no *resistance*. And what is there in thy brutish Lusts, that thou shoudst thus sacrifice to 'em thy *Estate* and *Substance*, thy *Name* and *Reputation*; nay thy *Health* and *Life* itself? Wilt thou for the short and momentary satisfaction of thy unruly Appetites, entail *Poverty* and *Misery* on thy *Self* or thy *Family*, bring an indelible *stain* on thy *memory*, and run the visible hazard of being a *Beggar* or a *Fall-bird*? Nay, wilt thou incense a Righteous God to expose thee to such temporal Distresses as a just punishment of thy riotous Excess? Wilt thou give him so just a provocation to *take away his Corn and Wine*, and all his other temporal Blessings which thou hast turned into *fuel* to thy extravagant Lusts; and to reduce thee to the want of the least of those daily Mercies which thou now abusest? Consider miserable Wretch, this jovial Life will not last long : And when so many Lusts bring in so large

Desires

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Items, thou must soon write at the foot of the *Account*, *All is wasted and spent.*

But because this is not altogether the Case of every Ungodly Sinner, many of whom (as I suggested) can make a shift so to manage their Vices, that they shall not intrench very deep upon their worldly Interest.

I wou'd therefore plead with every Ungodly Sinner from his *Great and everlasting Interest*, which his sinful Course is undoubtedly and apparently *pernicious* to.

Thy sensual ungodly Life may never perhaps bring thee into the *Prodigal's* Condition, to be a *Beggar* or a *Slave*; but it does expose thee to the hazard of what is infinitely worse. It will *empoverish* and *enslave* thy *Soul*, and endanger it's irreparable *everlasting Misery* and *Ruin*. And alas Man, what is there in thy sins that will counter-vail the mischievous Consequences of 'em! What is there in thy vain and sensual and worldly Life, that will compensate the Loss of God's Favour and Love, or bear thee up against the sense of his awful Displeasure, and the dread

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 63

dread of his terrible Vengeance? What is there in thy impure Lusts and excessive Sports and sinful Jollity, that will make amends for the loss of thy inward Peace ; and much more for the secret challenges and guilty fears of thy wounded and accusing Conscience (in which the lasting *Sting* of those sinful Delights *remains*, which are themselves long-since *gone* and *fled* ?) Nay what advantage and gain is there in all thy Sins that can countervail for the loss of pardon and forgiveness, of Life and Salvation, of Heaven and its everlasting Glories and Joys? What can the remembrance of the past momentary Pleasures of Sin, signify to bear thee up under the Anguish and Torments of a never-ending State, under the darkness and horrors of everlasting Misery and Despair? And yet this is the woful *End* to which thy Ungodly course leads ; This without Repentance will be the deplorable and remediless issue of, thy vain and brutish Life. O then begin to bethink thy self what thou art doing, and whither thou art going ! Consider what thy ways are, and where they are like to End ! Go on no longer blindfold in thy mad career

career of Sin ! Look to that precipice and gulf of endless Perdition that is before thee, and stop thy Feet before thy *paths take hold of Death and Hell.* Thou hast already done too much to undo thyself forever. Thou standest already on the borders of Hell, and the brink of Misery. Thy condition is extremely hazardous, how little soever thou apprehendest it ; and without a speedy Repentance, may soon become forlorn and desperate for ever. O then make a seasonable and happy retreat from the pernicious paths of Sin, that thou mayest escape the endless ruin they lead unto ! Let the visible danger of Perishing affright thee from continuing any longer in 'em.

Consider what has been already Suggested, that there will a time of Anguish and Distress come, in which thou wilt be forc'd to see and lament thy Wretched Condition. And O take heed that it come not too late to prevent thy utter and endless ruin ! 'Tis best now to consider thy danger whilst thou hast a time and space of Repentance before thee, and thy Wretched Case does yet admit of *Remedy and Redress.* For a-
las,

alas, if thou now persistest in thy jollity and carnal fearless security, till *Death* and *Judgement* come to give thee the unwelcome prospect of approaching Misery and Ruine; thou mayst probably see it, but *too late* to Escape it. Thou mayst then find and feel thy self ready to Perish, when all the *World* cannot help thee, and when *God* will not. If thou now turn a deaf Ear to his gracious Calls to Repentance, and stifle the present Convictions of thy Danger; time may come, when *he'll laugh at thy Calamity, and mock when thy fear comes, when thou shalt call, but he will not hear,* Prov. i. 26, 27, 28. O then consider the miserable issue of thy Sinful Life, while there is now such probable Hope, that it may be happily prevented!

But,

II. We may hence also infer the *Wisdom of the Divine Government that has Establish'd such an inseparable Connexion between Wickedness and Misery.*

And indeed 'tis an Illustrious instance of the Divine Wisdom, that he has so fram'd the Nature of Man, and so adapted his Laws thereto, that *Holiness* is to

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the *Soul* as it's *sound* and *healthful* Constitution, and *Sin* it's pernicious and mortal *Disease*. That (setting aside the Case of Persecution) *Holiness* has a real tendency to promote our *Present* and *Eternal Happiness*, and *Wickedness* is in the genuine tendency of it equally pernicious to *both*. So that the Infinitely wise God has every way made it our Interest to obey his Laws; and we cannot counteract 'em without the greatest Injury to our selves, as well as Dishonour to him. And indeed most of those Miseries to which the Sinner's wicked Course does expose him, are as truly the Natural product and Fruit of his own Sins, as the *Prodigal's* poverty and straits were the natural Effect of his riotous Living. So that the Prophet needed not to say any more for confirming the Truth of his awful Denunciation against the Wicked, *Woe to him, it shall be ill with him*. Then to add, *For the reward of his hands shall be given him*, H. 3. 11. v.

III. Will ungodly Sinners rather bear any hardships in their Wicked Course, than think of returning to God: Let me a little expostulate with such the unreasonableness of this their perverse Disaffection to him. One

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 67

One that had seen the poor *Prodigal*, when he was *hiring* himself to *feed Swine*, might have justly said to him; What foolish Man, wilt thou that hast such a *Father* to go to, with whom thou may'st live so creditably and happily, choose rather to become such a Despicable and such a wretched Slave? What, tho' thou hast greatly Offended him, by behaving thy self as an undutiful Child, yet he has not put off the bowels of a Father, and thou mayest hope that thy humble Confession of thy Faults, that thy promises of Amendment, that thy Prayers and Tears for forgiveness may prevail with him to restore thee to his Favour. At least 'tis thy Wisdom to try this method first.

So let me to the like purpose Exp-
stulate with every Unconverted and Un-
godly Sinner; Why shoud'st thou not
entertain serious Thoughts of returning
to God, when thy continued Departure
from him is like to End in thy ruin?
Thou hast no reason to be discouraged
from it from the sense of thy past Pro-
vocations, which he is so ready upon thy
Repentance to forgive. (Of which
more hereafter.) Why then dost thou
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68 *On the Parable of the*

not immediately resolve upon a Penitent return? Wilt thou choose rather to be the *Devil's* miserable *Slave*, than to be *his* accepted beloved *Child*? Wilt thou prefer the vile *Yondage* of *Sin* before his *Service*, which is thy truest *freedom*? Wilt thou rather feed *Swine*, than be employ'd in his *honourable Work*? Is sottish *Tippling* and *Drunkenness*, is filthy *Lust*, is *Carding* and *Dice*, or is the mean *Drudgery* of the *World*, so much nobler *Employment* than *reading* and *hearing*, *Prayer* and *Praise*, *Holy Conference*, and *Heavenly Meditation*? Hadst thou rather converse with *Brutes*, or with *Profane Sinners* that are not much better, than Entertain a Delightful *Communion*, not only with the *Saints below*, but with *God* and with *Angels* and *perfected Spirits above*? Wilt thou prefer such contemptible *Husks* (as all the unsatisfying *Transitory Pleasures* of *Sin*, or *Enjoyments* of this *World* are) before the *Feast of a good Conscience*, before the rich *Consolations* of the *Spirit of God*; and before the ravishing *Joys* that spring from the assuring prospect of his *Consummate Salvation*? Shal the *Laughter of Fools*, shall that
carnal

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 69

carnal mirth that is like the *crackling of Thorns under the pot*, (a sudden blaze that soon Expires) shall this be preferr'd before the *fullness of Joy that is in the presence of thy Heavenly Father*; and before *those Rivers of Pleasures that are at his right hand for ever more*? What has the Blessed God done, that thou art so Unaccountably Dis-inclined to him, and so insuperably averse to all Thoughts of returning to him? Wilt thou rather choose to perish in a voluntary Departure from him, than to be for ever happy in his restored Favour and Communion? *What Iniquity hast thou found in him*, that thou art so studious to *flee from him*? O stand astonish'd at, and lament over the Perverseness and Obstinacy of thy own Heart, that has hitherto entertain'd so incurable an Aversion to that blessed Being; who while thou hast been acting as a most rebellious *Child*, has still yearn'd over thee with the tenderest Bowels of a Compassionate Father! And wilt thou rather run upon thy own apparent Destruction, than come back to such an Indulgent Father as this?

IV. Does the wise God sometimes use such severe Methods to awaken Sin-

ners to Repentance, O let us see that they prove not ineffectual in any of us, towards whom he uses 'em.

Have any such foolish *Prodigals* here brought themselves by their riotous Living to Poverty and Straits, to the hazard of Misery and Ruin in this World? O at least let these wretched Effects of our own Folly bring us under deep Convictions of it, and awaken in us serious resolutions of Repentance; otherwise we shall frustrate the end of God's monitory rebukes, and defeat his Wise and Compassionate Methods to reclaim us. And the *Prodigal* in my Text will rise up in Judgment against us, whom Extremity of Want did at last bring to himself. It wou'd be a Dreadful sign of incorrigible hardness indeed; if like *King Ahaz* we shou'd even in our Distress it self *Trespass the more*; if the prospect of *Temporal* or of *Eternal* ruine will not persuade us to turn our feet from the paths of Sin; if the visible Danger of *Perishing* will not bring us back to our Heavenly Father.

But as God is not oblig'd to use this method with every profligate Sinner, nor does use it with all; it is our greatest

Serm. II. *Prodigal Son.* 71

greatest Wisdom to prevent the *Necessity* of it by a more *early* and *reasonable Conversion* to God, that may be rather apparently influenc'd by more *ingenuous Motives*, than seemingly *Extorted* from us only when we are *reduc'd to the last Extremity*. 'Tis more acceptable to be *sweetly* drawn to him by the *Cords of Love*, than as it were forcibly *driven* by *Necessity*, and a meer *Dread of remediless Ruin*. 'Tis well indeed if *any thing* will bring us back to God ; but 'tis most commendable and pleasing to be brought to it chiefly by the *Sense* of our *Duty*, and the ingenuous *Workings of filial Affections* towards our gracious and reconcilable Father, who is so willing to embrace us in his *Compassionate Arms*.

F I N I S.

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On the Parable of
The Prodigal.



SERM. III.

LUKE. Chap. XV.

Verf. 17, 18, 19, 20.

17. *And when he came to himself, he said;
How many hired Servants of my Father's
have Bread enough, and to spare, and I perish
with Hunger!*

18. *I will arise, and go to my Father; and
will say to him; Father I have sinned against
Heaven, and before thee.*

19. *And*

74 On the Parable of the

19. *And am no more worthy to be called thy Son, Make me as one of thy hired Servants.*

20. *And he arose and came to his Father, &c. —*

I Have already gone thro' two general *Branches* of this *Parable*.

I have consider'd the *Folly* of the *Prodigal* in his *voluntary Departure from his Father*; representing to us the greater *Folly* of *perverse Sinners* in their *wilful Defection and Estrangement from the Blessed God*.

I have also consider'd the *Misery and Distress*, which his riotous way of *Living* quickly reduc'd him to; representing to us, What the course of every *Ungodly licentious Sinner* will end in, if serious *Repentance* prevent it not.

I come now to open to you a more *bright and desirable Scene*, even to represent to you this *straying Prodigal brought back to his Father's House*, and meeting with the most *welcome Reception* upon his penitent *Return*; In which he is a fit *Emblem* to us of a *licentious Sinner* turn'd into a *sincere Convert*: And in him we may both behold the *ingenuous Exercises* of a *true Penitent*, in his

Serm. III. *Prodigal Son.* 75

his unfeigned *Conversion to God*, and the *welcome acceptance* he may expect from his *Heavenly Father*.

I shall at present confine my self to the consideration of the *former*; viz.

The

III^d. Branch of the Parable, *The prodigal Son's Return to his Father*; representing to us a *Sinner's unfeigned Conversion to God*.

And when he came to himself, he said *How many, &c.*

And here several Heads offer themselves to our *Observation*: As,

First, From the *Prodigal's* being said to come to himself, when he first entertain'd the Thoughts of *Returning to his Father*; we may observe,

That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course, he acts like a Man besides himself, like a distracted Creature; and then only comes to himself, and to the right use of his own reasonable Powers when he entertains the serious thoughts of returning to God.

Secondly; From the *Consideration* that first mov'd the *Prodigal* to entertain Thoughts of returning to his Father; viz. *That many hired Servants in his Father's*

76 *On the Parable of the*

Father's House had bread enough and to spare, while he perish'd with Hunger, we may observe,

That usually a Conviction and sense of their Misery and Danger does first awaken in such licentious Sinners, the serious Thought of returning to God.

Thirdly, From the Language and Temper of the prodigal Son; I will arise and go to my Father, and say, Father I have sinned, &c. We may observe,

That the Heart of a penitent Sinner towards God, will work and shew it self in ingenuous Confessions of his heinous Guilt and great Unworthiness, in dutiful Affection to his offended Heavenly Father, and in a sincere readiness to comply with any terms on which he may be readmitted to the Divine Favour.

Fourthly, From what we read, That he arose and came to his Father, we may observe,

That a true Penitent will put his sincere Resolutions of returning to God into speedy Execution.

Of these in their Order.

First, From the Prodigal's being said to come to himself, when he first entertain'd the Thoughts of returning to his Father, we may observe, That

Serm. III. *Prodigal Son.* 77

That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course, he acts like a Man besides himself, like a distracted Creature; and he then only comes to himself and to the right use of his reasonable Powers, when he entertains Thoughts of returning to God.

Here are two parts of this *Observation* which I shall distinctly Consider, The one *imply'd*, and *presuppos'd*; The other more directly *asserted*.

I. 'Tis here *imply'd* and *presuppos'd*; *That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course, he is besides himself, he acts like a poor distracted Creature.*

And truly we cannot easily conceive a more lively *Emblem* than a poor *distracted Creature* is, of a *licentious and Ungodly Sinner*. His *whole Life* looks like a continu'd Scene of *Frenzy and Folly*. He acts as if he had no use of his considerin Powers, or at least, as if the regular Exercise of 'em were greatly disturbed.

We reckon a Man *distracted* when he acts contrary to the nature of Things in matters wherein his own *Interest* is manifestly concerned; much more when he acts contrary to his own professed
Judgment

78 *On the Parable of the*

Judgement, concerning 'em, when he does the most apparently Absurd things.

If we see him like the *Youth that was possess'd with an Unclean Spirit*, sometimes running into the Fire, and sometimes into the Water, as if he had no sense of the Mischief he did to himself. Or like the crazed *Gadarene* that affected to make the *Mountains and Tombs his Abode*, and there cry'd and cut himself with Stones, and refus'd to wear any Cloaths, (Mar. 9. 22, &c. Mar. 5. 5. Luke 8. 27.) Shou'd we see such a Man, refusing the common conveniences of Life, doing all the harm he cou'd to himself, and raging against any one that wou'd endeavour to prevent it, or go about to cure him of his Frenzy; shou'd we see him mad and furious against those that wou'd take the most tender Care of him that is possible, and requiting their kindness with nothing but ill Language, and abusive behaviour; What cou'd we conclude concerning such a Man, but that he is *besides himself*?

And yet this is the real Case of every *Licentious Ungodly Sinner*. He acts quite contrary to the *nature of Things*, nay usually to his *professed Judgment*

con-

concerning 'em; in matters wherein his highest *Interest* is apparently Concern'd: So that his *Actions* carry upon 'em all the marks of *stupid Folly*; they are manifestly *Unreasonable* and *Absurd* in the last Degree.

And this will easily appear if we consider how he acts in reference to his *Soul* and his *highest Concerns*.

He carries about with him an *Immortal Spirit* that must survive his *Corruptible Body* in an endless Duration; and yet he acts from day to day, as if he expected to *Dye* as well as *Live* like the *Beasts that perish*. He cannot but know that he must *Dye*, and enter into an unseen *Eternal World*; and yet he makes not the least serious Preparation for *Death* or for *Eternity*. There is a God with whom he has Infinitely more to do than with all the World besides; and yet there is none that he lives in a more stupid *Forgetfulness* and *Neglect* of. Upon this great God he depends every Moment for his Life, and for all the Comforts thereof; and yet there is none to whom he offers greater Affronts and Provocations from Day to Day.

To

To this gracious God he is Infinitely more oblig'd, than he is to all the World; and yet there is none that he is less studious to Please; none whom he does more to Offend and Disoblige. He flies from the *Service* of God which is the truest *Liberty*, as if it were the most intolerable *Bondage*; and he's pleas'd with the Devil's *Chains* and *Fetters*, as if he enjoy'd the most *Desirable freedom*. He has the Vengeance of Eternal Fire set before him; and yet he boldly plays on the brink of the bottomless Pit; and as it were, rushes with his Eyes open on those Unquenchable Flames, as if there were no tremendous Danger and Misery in his view. He has the *Glories* and *Joy*s of an Eternal State in his offer; and yet he flights 'em as if they were unworthy of his Notice and Consideration; or he wilfully prefers the *vain* and *perishing* injoyment of *this World* before 'em. He barter away that inestimable *Pearl* for contemptible *Trifles*, and Sacrifices those *everlasting Joy*s to the *momentary pleasures* of *Sin*. He carries about him a *Conscience* as God's *Deputy* in his own Bosom; and yet he daily gives it the deepest wounds by his

Serm. III. *Prodigal Son.* 81

his deliberate Transgressions, and sows in it the Seeds of *Shame* and *Confusion*, of *Horror* and *Despair*. He acts as if his *Heaven-born Spirit* were not of so much value and consideration as this *clod of Earth*, and as if *Time* were more to be regarded than *Eternity*. He carries about him a *diseased Soul*, but he *undervalues* the great *Physitian of Souls*. He *spurns* at his *prescriptions* and *remedies*, and *resists* all his compassionate Attempts to *heal* and *cure* him. He studiously flees from his own *Happiness*, and acts as if he were desperately bent upon his own perdition and *Ruin*; as if he were resolv'd to undo himself, and that for ever; and took all those for his mortal Enemies who wou'd stop him in his mad Career, and hinder him from executing his pernicious Design. And can we imagine any higher Instances of *Distraction* and *Frenzy* than these? Shou'd we not think any Man *besides himself* that shou'd act so Absurdly and Unreasonably in any matters that concern his temporal Interest?

'Tis indeed true, that the sinners *Distraction* is not *Universal*; 'tis only a *Dementia quoad hoc*. He does use his reason, and often with sagacity enough

in reference to his *secular Affairs*, and his *bodily Interest*.

'Tis only in reference to his *Soul* and *Eternal concerns*, that he acts as if he had no use of his *Understanding*, or as if his *Thoughts* were under the greatest *Disorder* and *Confusion*. And this aggravates the *Sinner's* guilt, that whereas the *distracted* of *others* is often *involuntary*, and therefore a *Calamity* rather than a *Crime*. His is a *voluntary Frenzy*, arising from hence; not that he *cannot*, but that he *will not* use his *reasonable Powers* to consider and prosecute his highest and *Eternal Concerns*.

And to pursue the *Parallel* no farther. As *distracted Persons* have sometimes their *short lucid Intervals*, when they seem for a while to act *reasonably*; but their *Distemper* soon returns upon 'em; so have *licentious Sinners* under some transient *Convictions* and *Pangs* of *Conscience* their *lucid Intervals* too, in which they seem to recover some use of their *considering Powers*. But, alas, these are usually but of *short continuance*. Their *Goodness* is but as the *morning Cloud*, and the *early Dew* that soon goes away. Nay, their *sensual Lusts* after a short respite

strait are often more violent than ever, and hurry 'em into a greater excess of Riot and Folly.

But,

II. 'Tis here more directly asserted, *That Sinners then come to themselves and the right use of their reasonable Powers, when they entertain serious Thoughts of returning to God.*

And this will appear if we Consider, that they then begin to form a right Judgment of Things, and to act agreeably to it; they then begin to act like reasonable and thinking Creatures.

They now begin to discern the excellent Nature and noble Capacities, the invaluable worth and endless duration of their own Souls; and how far their higher Interests and Concerns are preferable to those of a perishing Body. And now the Salvation of an Immortal Soul is to them the one thing needful, which they resolve to mind, whatever else be Dis-regarded. Now the blessed God appears infinitely Great in their Eye; One with whom they have infinitely more to do, and from whom they have Infinitely more to hope or to fear than from

84. *On the Parable of the*

all the World; so that they are now above all things sollicitous to stand on good Terms with him. They now see so much of the odious defilement of Sin, and of the dreadful desert of it; so much of the beauty of Holiness, and the desirableness of the Divine Favour, as to see their absolute need of a compassionate Saviour, to restore 'em to the Image and the Love of God, and to renew a league of Amity and Peace between him and them. They now see the Necessity both of God's pardoning Mercy, and renewing Grace, and are anxiously concern'd to seek and obtain it. Now the things of the future invisible World appear as certain and great and infinitely momentous realitys in their Eye. Now the Glories of Heaven infinitely out-shine all the pomp and the vanishing shows of this Earth. Now the Terrors of Hell appear more formidable than any temporal Evils. Now the concerns of Eternity in their practical Judgment, infinitely out-weigh those of Time. These important Objects now appear to 'em in a clear and convincing Light, as the Objects of sense did to the Man whose Sight was restored, Mark 8. 23, 24.

Their

Their Souls are no longer with reference to these spiritual Objects bound up in a deep sleep; they are now awake and attentive, and these great things begin to make their suitable and powerful *Impression* upon their minds. They are come to themselves, and begin now to act like thinking Creatures.

And this is all I shall offer on this first Observation.

Secondly, From the Consideration that first moved the Prodigal to entertain Thoughts of Returning to his Father; viz. That many hired Servants in his Father's House had Bread enough and to spare, while he perish'd with Hunger, We may farther observe,

That 'tis usually a conviction and sense of their Misery and Danger that first awakens in Sinners the serious Thoughts of returning to God.

The Prodigal first saw himself ready to perish, before he wou'd think of coming back to his Father: And so rooted is the Aversion of all, especially of more profligate Sinners to the Blessed God, that they rarely think of returning to him, till they see an unavoidable Necessity of doing so, or of being miserable

ble for ever. And the more the vitious Habits of corrupt Nature are rivetted and strengthened by a long customary course of Sinning, the more need there is of awful Terrors to reclaim 'em. Their Consciences are usually so stupid, and they contract such an insensibleness and spiritual Lethargy, that they need the loudest Alarms of Divine Threatnings to awaken 'em, and usually till they come to see, That their present Condition is undone and hopeless, that they are Condemn'd already, and that the Wrath of God abides on 'em, 3 John 18. and ult. That except they repent they must (unavoidably) perish, Luke 13. 3. Full then, all our Counsels and Persuasions are in a great measure lost upon 'em. They are usually so madly bent upon their Lusts and their sinful Pleasures, that nothing can stop 'em in their mad Career, but the Flames of Eternal Vengeance dash in their Faces. But when once the sense of their extreme Danger is set home upon their Consciences, when their guilt in all its aggravations starts 'em in the Face; when they see there is but one step between them and Hell, and that they stand on the very Precipice of the infernal

Serm. III. *Prodigal Son.* 87

nal Gulf; when like the *Prodigal* they are in their own apprehensions just ready to perishe; we may then expect to hear from 'em such earnest and anxious Enquiries as those of the *Tailor*, Sirs, *What shall I do to be Saved?* Acts 16. 30. See also, Acts 21. 37.

Sometimes indeed God brings Sinners under these deep *Convictions* by some awful methods of his Providence, by deep *Afflictions* and *Distresses*, by casting 'em upon a *sick-bed*, by holding 'em over the *Grave*, and giving 'em the tremendous view of a near *Eternity*: But he does it most usually by the *Threatnings* of his *Word* applied to their *Consciences*. And herein the Blessed God is pleas'd to make use of the great Principle of *Self-love* and *Self-preservation*, that is so deeply rooted in our Nature. What will not a Man *part with*, or what will not a Man *do or give* for the preserving this Natural Life? As Satan saith in *Job's* case, *Skin for Skin, and will a Man bargain, will he give for his Life,* Job 2. 4. What then will not a Man whose Conscience is truly awaken'd forego, or what will he not do or give to save the more valuable Life of

his Soul, and to prevent it's being irreparably lost and that for ever? What will not a Man do to prevent Eternal and remediless Destruction? So that if Love to God will not attract, yet Love to ourselves shou'd even drive us to him, and excite us to serious Thoughts of a penitent Return. We shou'd argue as the Lepers, *If we stay here we Perish. And if we fall into the hands of the Syrians, we can but Dye.* 2 Kings 7. 4. So, if we continue in our Sins, we shall unavoidably Perish; and if we must do so, 'tis better to do it at the feet of our offended Father; and who knows but his Bowels of pity may yearn towards us upon our penitent Return to him?

But this leads me to the next Observation, viz.

Thirdly, We may from the Temper and Language of the prodigal Son, *I will arise and go to my Father, and say, Father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son, make me as one of thy hired Servants;* we may observe.

That the heart of a penitent sinner towards God will work and shew it self, in ingenuous Confession of his heinous guilt and

and great Unworthiness, in dutiful Affection to his offended Father, and in a readiness to comply with any Terms on which he may be readmitted to the Divine Favour.

So that in the Prodigal's Spirit and Language, we have the genuine Exercises of a truly relenting Soul described unto us: Of which I shall briefly speak.

II. The heart of a true penitent will work towards God in the Exercise of filial and dutiful Affection.

I will arise (saith he) and go to my Father. He begins now to revive the sense of his Father's Authority over him, and Interest in him, and Affection to him, and to feel those stirrings of natural Affection, which were suitable to his filial Relation.

And thus will it be with every sincere Penitent towards God. 'Tis true indeed, Terror and Fear may first awaken these serious Thoughts in him; but 'tis the sense of Duty and the workings of Child-like Affection that must bring about a thorough and sincere Conversion. The Sinner must be truly sensible, that his Heavenly Father has a just Authority over him, and an entire

pra-

propriety in him; nay he must be able to draw some Encouragement from the Declarations of his gracious Nature, as he has now represented himself in Jesus Christ, reconciling the guilty World to himself, not imputing their Trespases to 'em. And these Considerations must soften and melt his heart into a Dutiful and Child-like Disposition, in order to his ingenuous and sincere Return to him. He must both be sensible of the Obligations to Duty which the Relation of a Father lays upon him; and of the Encouragement to hope for Pardon and Pity which it suggests to him; and both must concur to kindle the sparks of filial and dutiful Love in his Soul. He must think and speak of God as a Father, and be affected towards him as becomes a returning Child. And thus will he be enabled to say, *My Father and I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and art now more worthy to be called thy Son.* Our

Our *Repentance* wou'd be far from *Sincere* and *Lasting*, if it were only the *Effect* of *Terror*, if it proceeded only from a *dread* of *Punishment*, and not from a *due sense* of the *malignity* of *Sin* and just *Abhorrence* of it. Nor wou'd the blessed *God* accept of a *Sinner* that shou'd come to him meerly by *constraints* and not out of *choice*. And therefore, tho' the *Spirit of God*, in reclaiming a *Sinner* may alarm his *Conscience*, and make his *Fear* the *first Motive* to his *Repentance*; yet he does not leave him there, but proceeds to represent his *Folly* and *Sin*, his *ingratitude* and *perverseness* in all its *Aggravations*, and then his *filial Affection* appears in all the workings of *Shame* and *Sorrow*, of just *abhorrence* of his *Sins* and *Indignation* against himself for 'em. Then he is ready to break out in such *penitential Confessions* as these.

“ O Gracious and Compassionate Fa-
 “ ther! How manifold *Affronts* have
 “ I offered to thy just *Authority*! And
 “ what *inexcusable Contempt* have I ex-
 “ prest of thy *endearing Love*! How
 “ long have I run from thy *House* and
 “ *Family*, and from under thy wise *Go-*
 “ *vernment* and thy *tender Care*! How
 “ long

92 *On the Parable of the*

" long have I wasted all the *Talents* and
 " *Time* thou hast entrusted me with, in
 " *riotous Living*! How long have I cast
 " thy *Commands* behind my Back, and
 " trampled on thy *Laws*, and despis'd
 " thy *Counsels*, and chosen rather to
 " follow the *Suggestions* of Satan, the
 " *Dictates* of the *Flesh*, and the cor-
 " rupt *Maxims* of this sinful *World*.
 " And O with what a stupid and per-
 " verse *Ingratitude* have I turn'd a deaf
 " Ear to all thy compassionate *Calls* to
 " *Return*, and slighted Thine alluring
 " *Offers* of *Pardon* and *Peace*, of *A-*
 " *doption* into thy *Family*, and of a *Right*
 " to thy *Heavenly Inheritance*! And
 " now, Lord, I must own my self un-
 " worthy to be called thy *Son*; so that if
 " thou refuselt to receive me into thy
 " *Family*, and to restore me to the
 " privileges of thy *Children*, I must
 " acknowledge the *Equity* of thy Sen-
 " tence, and lye down in shame and con-
 " fusion speechless before Thee.
 " With such a deep detestation of his
 " *Sins*; with such abhorrence of his Per-
 " verseness and *Ingratitude*; with such a-
 " basing *Thoughts* of his own *Vileness*
 " and *Mis-deserts*, will a true *Penitent* re-
 " turn

Serm. III. *Prodigal Son.* 93

turn to his offended Father and Lord :
With such confusion and remorse and
self-loathing will he prostrate himself at
his Feet. Those Sins that before he made
a light matter of, nay perhaps cou'd glo-
ry in, he now stands Astonish'd at his
own Folly in the Commission of, he
now blushes at the remembrance of 'em,
and cannot review 'em without deep In-
dignation against himself, and a hum-
bling sense of his grievous Demerit.

Nay,

3. *The Heart of a true Penitent will
work towards God, in a readiness to
comply with any Terms on which he may
be readmitted to his favour.*

*Make me (saith the Prodigal) as one
of thy hired Servants. q. d. I now see,
That the Condition of one of the meanest
of thy Servants is far happier than mine;
and I wou'd rather stoop to the lowest Of-
fice, than remain any longer a miserable
Exile from thy House.*

Thus will a convinced and relenting
Sinner, accept of Divine Favour and
Mercy upon any Terms whatsoever. He
reckons it such an Honour and Happi-
ness to be receiv'd into God's Family,
and into the number of his Adopted
Chil.

Children, that he makes no *Exceptions* against any of his just *Proposals*. He does not come with *Reserves* and *Limitations* of this or that *Self-denying*, or *Difficult* or *Expensive* Duty and Service that he wou'd be Exempted from; or of the Liberty he must be indulged to gratifie this or that profitable or pleasing Sin: No, he is ready to say with the penitent *Saul* upon his Conversion; *Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?* Acts 9. 6.

There's no *beloved Lust* but what he's now willing to *Renounce*, tho' it may have been to him as *dear* as a *right Hand*, or a *right Eye*. There's no *Duty* how *displeasing* soever to the *Flesh*, but what he is now willing to *Engage* in. He thinks it now most reasonable and just, that God's rightful *Yoke* shou'd be submitted to; that his *conditions of Peace* be *accepted*; and that he shou'd return to a state of dutiful Subjection to him as his sovereign *Ruler* and *Lord*; and he begs that the grace of God wou'd write his *Laws* in his *Heart*, and mould his *Will* into an entire agreement with the *Divine*. In a *Word*, he is heartily willing to be readmitted into the *Family* and *favour* of

of God upon *any terms whatsoever*. If it be too great an honour to be a *Son*, he is willing to be as an *hired Servant* in his House.

In such genuine *Exercises* as these does the Heart of a penitent Sinner work towards God. With such a *filial temper and disposition* does he return to him.

But I proceed to the next Observation.

Fourthly, From what we read of the *prodigal Son's arising and coming to his Father*; we may observe,

That a true Penitent will put his Resolutions of returning to God into speedy Execution.

The *Prodigal* having resolv'd the matter in his own deliberate Thoughts, he *delays not*, but *immediately rises and goes to his Father*.

And agreeable hereto will the practice of a *sincere Penitent* be; his *Convictions* will produce a *sincere Resolution* of returning to God, and he will not *delay* the putting his holy purpose in *Execution*.

I. *His Convictions will produce a sincere Resolution of returning to God.*

He will not stifle the *Convictions* of his own awakned Conscience, nor quench the

the Motions of the Spirit of God. He will debate this important matter with himself, till he has brought his Soul to a fixed Determination that he will come back to his Heavenly Father, and cast himself into his Compassionate Arms, with unfeigned protestations and vows of future Duty and Obedience. And indeed all those *Convictions* and *Terrors* are like to fall short of *sincere Conversion* that leave our *Minds wavering* and our *Wills Unresolved*. All those *Pangs* will fall short of the *New-birth* that do not turn the prevalent bent of the Heart towards God. The *Prodigal's* Heart was then gain'd, when he said, *I will arise and go to my Father*.

2. *A true Penitent will not delay to put his holy purpose of returning to God in Execution.*

He will (as the *Prodigal*) immediately *arise and go*.

Alas, those flight purposes of *Repenting hereafter*, which so many put off the present *Convictions* of Conscience with, are never *sincere*, and therefore like to prove *Abertive*! And alas, How many *seeming Penitents* are there, that fatally miscarry by suffering their good pur-

purposes to Languish and Dye, by delaying the great Work of Repentance, tho' convinc'd of the Necessity of it, by putting these matters off as *helix* to a (pretendedly) *more convenient Season*: And alas, How does the Goodness of such prove only as the *Morning Cloud*, and the *early Dew* that soon goes away! The *Morning Cloud* promis'd a seasonable *Shower*, and the *early Dew* gave some hope of refreshing the Earth, and making it *Fruitful*: But the *Cloud* soon scatters and vanishes, and the *Dew* is quickly dried up. And so do the fair hopes of the Sinner's Reformation vanish, when his Resolutions unbend, and the Execution of 'em is deferr'd to an *Uncertain hereafter*.

But a true *Penitent* is restless till he actually return to God. He not only sees the Absolute Necessity of it, but is fully convinc'd he can never return *too soon*, nor can without Extreme hazard and Folly defer it any longer. He therefore immediately upon the review of his Ways, *turns his Feet to God's Testimonies*; He makes haste and delays not to keep his Commands, Ps. 119. 59, 60.

When I say he *returns to God*, I mean, that he *returns* to him as his *Absolute Owner*, resigning himself to his Disposal, and devoting his *All* to his Interest and Service. He returns to him as his *rightful King and Lord*, subjecting his Heart and Life to his Authority and Laws. He returns to him as his *gracious Benefactor* and the *Object of his final Happiness*, with a sincere Disposition to Love him above all, and to seek his final satisfying Blessedness in his Eternal Favour and Love. He *returns* to him as his *reconciled Father*, whom he will Honour and Glorify: As his *merciful Redeemer and Saviour*, whom he will Trust and Obey: As his *Sanctifier*, to whose Conduct and Government he resigns himself. And he renounces whatever is inconsistent with his Duty to the blessed God, and with his regular hopes of Eternal Happiness in him.

And this he does immediately without delay, he puts it not off to another Time.

It remains that we *Improve* what has been said. And all the *Use* I shall here make of the foregoing *Observations* is only

Serm. III. *Prodigal Son.* 99

only to urge upon Sinners this Necessary Duty of a Penitent Return and Conversion to God. And for that end to propose what the foregoing Observations suggest, by way of *Direction* and *Motive*.

First, I wou'd urge upon all *impenitent Ungodly Sinners* this Necessary and Important Duty of a *sincere Return and Conversion to God*.

And O that every poor *Prodigal* here wou'd this Day take up this solemn purpose in my Text, *I will arise and go to my Father*, and put it in immediate Execution!

You have too long alienated your selves from the Blessed God : O now return to him as your *Absolute Owner*.

Let it be the Language of your Souls ;

“ Blessed Lord I now freely own thy

“ absolute Propriety and Interest in me,

“ and in all that I am^o and have, and

“ will henceforth live as *thine*, and not

“ as *my own*. The faculties of my

“ Soul and Members of my Body I

“ offer as a *living Sacrifice* to thee, to

“ be Employ'd in thy faithful per-

“ petual Service. To Thee shall all my

“ *Talents* and *Time* be devoted. And

100 *On the Parable of the*

“ to thy Providential Disposal I freely
 “ resign my self and all my Concerns.

You have too long revolted from
 God, O return to him as your rightful
Ruler and Lord. Let it be your sincere
 Language. “ Thee, Lord, I avouch for
 “ my Heavenly Sovereign ; to Thee I
 “ swear all Fidelity and Allegiance ;
 “ to thy *Authority and Laws* I Subject
 “ my *Heart and Life* ; thy *Service* I
 “ Embrace as my truest *Freedom* ; and
 “ to do thy *Will on Earth as 'tis done in*
 “ *Heaven* shall be the Business and
 “ Pleasure of my Life.

You have too long forsaken the Blef-
 sed God : O now return to him as your
sovereign Good. Let it be the sincere
 Language of your Souls. “ Thou
 “ Lord art my entire Benefactor and
 “ the only Fountain of all my Happi-
 “ ness. . Thou art alone my Everlasting
 “ and Satisfying Portion. *Thy loving*
 “ *kindness is better than Life*, Ps. 63. 3.
 “ In thy immediate Eternal Presence a-
 “ lone is fulness of Joy ; and at thy
 “ right Hand are pleasures for evermore,
 “ Ps. 16. ult. Thou alone art the Ob-
 “ ject of my ardent Desires and highest
 “ Delight. In the fruition of Thee (the
 spring

Serm. III. *Prodigal Son.* 101

“ spring of Light and Life and Joy)
“ does my Soul expect it's everlasting
“ Content and Rest. All Creatures are
“ to me but *broken Cisterns*; Thou a-
“ lone art the *Fountain of living Waters*.

Having thus *exhorted* you to return to
God, I shou'd enforce the *Exhortation*
with such *Directions* and *Motives* as the
foregoing *Observations* suggest. But
that I shall reserve to the next Discourse.

FINIS.

...of light and life and joy
...my soul expect it's everlasting
...and R. ... All ... are
...the broken ... I have
...the ... being ...
...this ... you ...
...the ...
...the ... as the
...
...
...the next ...

11112

On the Parable of The Prodigal.

SERM. IV.

LUKE, Chap. XV.

Verf. 17, 18, 19, 20.

17. *And when he came to himself, he said;
How many hired Servants of my Father's
have Bread enough and to spare, and I perish
with Hunger!*

18. *I will arise, and go to my Father, and
will say to him; Father I have sinned against
Heaven, and before thee.*

19. *And am no more worthy to be call'd
thy Son, Make me as one of thy hired Servants.*

20. *And he arose and came to his Father,
&c.* =====

I Enter'd in the former Discourse on the Third Branch of the Parable; viz.

III. The prodigal Son's return to his Father, representing to us a Sinner's unfeigned Conversion to God.

And in this Branch of the Parable, several things were observed: As,

First. That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course; he acts like a Man besides himself, and then only comes to himself, and to the right use of his own reasonable Powers, when he entertains serious Thoughts of returning to God.

Secondly, 'Tis usually a sense and conviction of their Misery and Danger that first awakens in such licentious Sinners the serious Thoughts of returning to God.

Thirdly, That the heart of penitent Sinner will work towards God, in the Exercise of filial and dutiful Affection, in the ingenuous Confession of his heinous guilt and great Unworthiness, and in a readiness to comply with any Terms on which he may be readmitted to his Favour. And,

Fourthly, That a true Penitent will put his Resolutions of returning to God, into speedy Execution. I

I have already spoken to each of these Heads.

In the *Application* thereof I propos'd.

First, To urge upon every *Ungodly Sinner* this necessary *Duty* of a *penitent Return and Conversion to God*.

Secondly, To *propose* for that End such *Directions* and *Motives* as the foregoing Heads do suggest.

I have already insisted on the former Head; and now proceed.

Secondly, To *enforce my Exhortation* to this necessary *Duty* with such *Directions* and *Motives* as the foregoing Heads do suggest.

By way of *direction* in our *penitent Return to God*, we may consider the following *Advices* as suggested to us by the foregoing Heads :

As,

I. That in order to our effectual *Conversion* and *penitent Return to God*, we must begin to use our *considering Powers* in the concerns of our *Souls* and of *Eternity*.

For since the *Impenitency* of a *Sinner* is the effect of a *voluntary Distraction*; and that while he runs from God, he is

as

as a Man besides himself; we may infer on the contrary, That if Sinners wou'd once *come to themselves* by the serious Exercise of their Reason and Consideration, about their spiritual Concerns, we shou'd have great hopes of their being *brought back to God*. For we have their *Reason and Conscience* on our side, whenever they entertain any sober and serious Thoughts, and attend to the Dictates of that *Monitor* in their own Breasts. And we have those *Arguments* to offer 'em, drawn from their *indispensible Duty*, from their own *apparent Advantage and Interest*, and from the *Obligations of Gratitude and Love*, that wou'd prevail with 'em (by the concurrence of Divine Grace) if they were often and impartially Weigh'd. And we are sure that there is nothing reasonable that can be Objected against their penitent Return to God. If either the *Danger of extreme and remediless Misery* that will be the certain issue of their final Impenitency can *Awaken and Alarm* 'em; or if the *Reasonableness and Excellency* of the *Service of God* can *invite* 'em to it; or if the high *Honour* and inestimable *Privileges* of the *adopted Children of God*.

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 107

God can allure 'em to return to his Family ; or if the *Prospect* and *Hope* of an *Eternal Inheritance* can win and gain their Hearts : Or if the highest *Obligations* of *infinite Mercy* can melt 'em, or the strongest *CORDS* of *Divine Love* draw 'em ; we have all this and much more to propose to 'em. And these are *Arguments* that seem to carry an irresistible Force to those that will but deliberately ponder 'em, and wou'd probably prevail with 'em in any other Case. But alas, How usually do all these Arguments lose their Force and prove ineffectual to persuade 'em thro' their stupid and wilful *Inconsideration* ! And 'tis no wonder that the wisest *Charmer* cannot *charm* those whose *Ears* are as much *stopt* to his voice, as those of the *deaf Adder*, Ps. 58. 5. O then begin to shake off that unthinking and careless Humour you have hitherto cherish'd ! Begin to use those reasonable powers in the concerns of your *Souls* and their *everlasting Interest*, which you can so readily employ about any *lower Affairs*. Act no longer in such matters of infinite Moment and Consequence like *Distracted inconsiderate Creatures*.

O begin to bethink your selves what Advantage or Benefit you have ever gain'd by your voluntary Departure from God, and what you can reasonably expect your licentious Course will end in; Examine the *Justice* and *Equity* of that *Claim* he lays to you and to your utmost Obedience and Service; impartially consider the merciful offers he makes to returning Penitents, and see whether they be not worthy of your thankful Acceptance; ponder the *present* invaluable *privileges* of the Children of God, and their much greater *Hopes* and *Expectations*, and then act as your unprejudic'd Reason and Conscience will advise. If upon this impartial view, thy Conscience tell thee, that the *Devil* and thy *Lusts* have a juster Title to thy service than God; that *their Service* is more *reasonable* and *excellent* than *his*; that his *great and precious promises* are *out-bid* by their *Offers*, and that their *Wages* are preferable to his *Eternal Rewards*, then go on in thy voluntary detection from God, and see what will be the end of it. But if thy Conscience tell thee quite contrary, that *God alone* has the *just claim* to thy Heart and Life;

Life, while *Satan* and *Sin* are vile *Usurpers*; that *his Service* alone is the most honourable *Liberty*, but *theirs* the most ignominious *Vassalage*; that their *Wages* are *Death* and *Misery*, *Ruin* and *Despair*; his *Rewards* infinitely *Glorious* and *Great* as well as *Durable* and *Permanent*; that their most specious *offers* are both *Delusive* in themselves, and infinitely *Out-weigh'd* by his glorious *Promises*; O resolve then to choose and act as becomes a reasonable Creature that is unwilling to have a fatal cheat impos'd on thy self in a matter of infinite Moment and Consequence! Use that *Sagacity* and *Wisdom*, that impartial and deep *Consideration* in this case that thou wou'dst in *any other* that concerns thy bodily Life, and the momentary Interests thereof.

And, O that I cou'd gain thus far upon every impenitent Sinner, to persuade him to retire, and to take these matters into his most serious Thoughts! Even this wou'd be a very hopeful step towards his sincere Conversion; if he wou'd but once set himself to *think on his own Ways*, we might have some comfortable expectation, that *he wou'd turn his feet to God's*

110 *On the Parable of the*

God's Testimonies, Ps. 119. 59. v. And I am sure that Man is wholly inexcusable that will not do thus much towards his own Conversion.

II. *Do not cease your serious Thoughts about these matters, till you have brought your Souls to a fixed Determination, that you will return to God.*

You see the *Prodigal* when he came to himself, reason'd the Case with himself, 'till he came to a resolution in the Point, that *he wou'd arise and go to his Father.*

And thus shou'd we when we have this important matter under our serious Consideration bring it to an issue, and come to a fixed choice and Resolution what we will do. For nothing can be more absurd and unreasonable than to continue *unresolv'd* and *wavering* in a matter of so unspeakable Importance as this is. Alas, Man, thy *Soul*, and thy *everlasting Interest* is at stake, and these are not matters to be dallied with, or left to doubtful *uncertainties*. The great *God* on the one hand, and *Satan* and *Sin* on the other claim thy Heart and thy Life; and 'tis fit thou shoud'st come to a settled Resolution, to whether of these thou wilt give the *Possession* of the one, and the

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 111

the *use* and *Service* of the *other*. Obe-
ware of stifling thy present Convictions,
and of putting off the Remonstrances
and Pleadings of the Spirit of God and
of thy own Conscience to *another hear-*
ing ! Say not to 'em as trembling *Felix*
under the uneasy pangs of an alarmed
Conscience did to *Paul*, *Go thy way*
now, and when I have a more convenient
Season, I will call for thee, Acts, 24. 25.
No, the unconceivable importance of
the Case requires a *present* and *speedy*
Decision. Thou canst have nothing be-
fore thee of greater Moment, and
wherein 'tis more needful to come to a
Determination. And sure it shou'd with
a reasonable Soul need no long delibera-
tion to come to a resolution and choice
in so plain a Case as this. What ! Is
it so doubtful a matter, whether a *Pro-*
digal that is *ready to Perish* shou'd *return*
to his Father ! Whether an *Ungodly Sin-*
ner that is under a *sentence of Death* and
Condemnation, and walks every day and
hour on the *brink of Eternal Perdition*,
shou'd *come back* and throw himself into
the Compassionate Arms of a reconcil-
able tho' offended God and Father ?
Shou'd not a bare consideration of the
indi-

indispensible Necessity of it to prevent his own endless Ruin, easily and quickly resolve an awakened Sinner what to do ! Shou'd not even the *Terrors of the Lord* effectually persuade and drive him to Repentance ! 2 Cor. 5. 11. Shou'd the choice appear difficult, when *Blessing and Cursing, everlasting Life or Death* are set before us ! Is it so doubtful, whether God or Satan have the more undoubted *Rights* to us ? Whether the *Bondage* of the *Devil's Slaves* or the *Liberty* of the *Children of God* be more desirable ? Whether the *paths* of *Death* and *Hell*, or those of *Life* be more safe and *elegible* ? Whether the *Wage* of *Sin* or the *Rewards* of *Holiness* be preferable ? Whether the *considerations* of *Duty* and *Gratitude* and *Interest* by which we shou'd be sway'd, lye on God's side, or on that of *Satan* and *Sin* ? I say are these so dubious matters that we find it hard to know what *Resolution* we shou'd come to ? Or rather, is not the *cause* of God so clear, so certain, and so *indisputable*, as shou'd soon bring us the happy *decision* and *purpose* of the *Prodigal* in my Text, That we will arise and go to our Father, That we will change

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 113

change our *Master* and our *Service*; that we will renounce the vile and pernicious Bondage of Satan and our own Lusts, and make a seasonable *retreat* from the paths of Sin and Death; and that we will *return* to our rightful *Owner, Lord,* and *Benefactor*, and will engage in his *just* his *honourable* and *advantageous Service*; and now turn our feet to those *ways* of *Divine Wisdom*, that are *Ways* of *pleasantness*, and *paths* of *Peace*: O let us then pursue our serious Thoughts about these matters, and fix our Minds on the attentive consideration of such *moving Arguments*, till we find our Judgments fully convinc'd, *That to return to God is our unquestionable Duty and highest Interest*; and till our *Wills* are brought to a fixed *Resolution* about it. Let us by no means leave a Matter of such awful Consequence, *doubtful* and *undetermin'd*.

Supposing then that you are brought to a *settled purpose* and choice of *returning to God*. I add,

III. That you shou'd *imitate* this *relenting Prodigal* both in the *manner* and *time* of your *Return to him*.

H First,

114 *On the Parable of the*

First, You shou'd *imitate* him in the *time of your Return to God.*

He did it *immediately* and *without delay*; he put his good *Resolutions* into *speedy Execution*; he no sooner had come to a *Determination* with himself but he *arose* and *came to his Father.*

So must we put our purposes of *sincere Repentance* into *speedy Execution.* We must beware of *deferring* that *Necessary Work* to another time, and putting it off to an *uncertain hereafter.* For this is one of the most successful *Artifices* the Devil uses to elude the force of *Men's Convictions*, and render their purposes of *Repentance* and *Conversion* ineffectual and abortive. When they are convinc'd, that there is a *Necessity of returning to God*; yet he persuades 'em there is *time enough* for doing that, that they may enjoy the *Pleasures of Sin* a little longer, or bring their worldly *Affairs* to a better *Settlement*; and then they will have more *Inclination* and more *Leisure* for the exercise of *Repentance*; that they need not be over-hasty in that matter, since *Youth* is the proper *season* for *jollity* and *mirth*, and the *World* is *now before 'em*, and 'tis *time enough* to think

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 115

think of those things when *Sickness* or *Age* come upon 'em. This *Stratagem* of the *Devil* being so *common* and so *successful*, there is the greater need of *forewarning* you of it, and *forearming* you against it. Accordingly we shou'd whilst it is call'd to *Day*, *hearken to his voice*, and call to *Repentance*. We shou'd not put it off *one Day* longer.

And that I may excite you to such an early speed in your *Returning to God*, I shall enforce this *Direction* with a few *Motives*: As,

I. Consider, *That the same Arguments that shou'd persuade you to return to God at all, shou'd induce you to return now, presently and without Delay.*

Do you resolve to return to *God* some time or other, because 'tis your *indispensible Duty*? And is it not your *Duty now*? Does he not require you to *seek him early*? Does he not *Claim the whole of your Life and Time* to be devoted to his *Service*? Are not all your *Delays* *inexcusably Sinful*? Do you not most unjustly and unthankfully alienate all that part of your *Life* from him which you spend in *Folly and Vanity*, in the

service of the Flesh or the World? So that if God's *Authority* and *Command*, his *Call* and *Claim* have any Weight with you, 'tis as urgent a Motive to return *now* as ever it will be, and therefore as likely to prevail now as ever.

Again, Do you *resolve* upon a sincere *Conversion to God*, because you think his *Service* preferable to that of *Satan* and *Sin*? And shou'd not that Argument induce you to *return immediately*? What are you afraid of being too soon freed from the chains of *Satan*, and the ignominious fetters of your own *Lusts*? Are you afraid of being restor'd to the desirable *Liberty* of the Children of God too soon? Who wou'd not Embrace the first occasion of exchanging an *unjust Usurper* and *Tyrant*, for a *rightful* and *gracious Lord*, and a rigorous pernicious *Servitude*, for an *easy Yoke* and *light Burden*?

Again; Do you *resolve* to *return to God*, because you apprehend there is an *absolute Necessity* of such a *Conversion* to your *Eternal Salvation*? And shou'd not this Argument plead strongly for a *speedy Repentance* and against all *tedious Delays*? Can you be too *hasty in fleeing*
from

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son* 117

from the Wrath to come? Can you escape everlasting and remediless Ruin too soon? Can you be too early in obtaining the favour of a reconciled God, and in securing your Pardon and Acceptance with him thro' Jesus Christ? Can you make *too much haste* to be happy for ever? Can you flee from the paths of Hell and Destruction, and enter into the strait way that leads to Eternal Life too soon? Or rather shou'd not these momentous consequences of a sincere Conversion to God, represent the most *early speed* in it, as most *reasonable* and *prudent*, and the contrary *delay* as most *inexcusable*? Shou'd not this Argument put you on *making haste and not delaying to keep God's Commandments*? Ps. 119. 60.

Nay, Is the *goodness* and *patience* of God a just *motive* to *Repentance*? 'Tis also as forcible and cogent an one to promote an *early* and *speedy Repentance*; because all your tedious Delays of it do *abuse* that Infinite Goodness and Patience of His, and do wretchedly *pervert* the great *Design* of it.

In a word, Whatever Arguments prove it *Necessary* you shou'd *return to*

158 *On the Parable of the*

God at all, do represent it as most reasonable that you shou'd return immediately, and do condemn your Folly in deferring it to another distant season. But,

2. Consider, That all such delays of Repentance and Return to God are extremely hazardous.

And this will appear if you consider the following Particulars.

1. There is great hazard lest Death shou'd prevent you.

I hope none of you are so vain as to think, that you have any certain Lease of your future Life, and can promise yourselves many Years yet to come. Common Experience so fully shews us the utter uncertainty of the Life of Man; we see it expos'd to so many thousands Accidents that could neither be foreseen nor prevented; we behold so many thousand Instances of human Frailty in those that were Young, nay in those that seem'd to have the firmest Constitution, that it were the most inexcusable Folly to think our selves for any long time to come secure from the hazard of Death. Alas! Death lies in Ambush against us in every Vein and Nerve; the Seeds of Mortality are sown in

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 119

in every part of our *Bodies*, and often break out with an *irresistable* and *sudden* Violence. Sometimes *Death* seizes upon us with such a quick *surprize* as gives us no *warning* of it's *Approach*, and no *leisure* to *prepare* for it. We are often suddenly carried down the stream of Time, & launch'd into Eternity before we know where we are. And very usually *Sickness* it self reduces us into a Condition in which we are *unfit* to manage any important *Affair* at all, and much more one of so infinite Moment as this of our Conversion to God is, which requires the intensest Application of a compos'd Mind, and the deepest exercise of our serious undisturbed Thoughts. And shall we then by delaying our Repentance expose our Souls and their everlasting Concerns to such miserable *hazards* and *uncertainties* as these? Shall we dare to go on in that impenitent Ungodly Course in which we are not sure but a sudden Death may this day surprize us, but are sure that if it do, our case is *Hopeless* and *Desperate* forever? Is it fit for us to dally and trifle about that necessary Work on which our Salvation depends, while we every Day tread on

the *brink* of an awful Eternity? Many thousands have been thus *betrayed* into sudden and endless Perdition by depending on the *vain purposes* of a future *Repentance*. And shou'd we not dread least this shou'd prove our Case? Nay shall we every day, every hour run the foolish *Risque* of it? Is the safety and welfare of our immortal Souls the only thing we can find to put upon so mad and desperate an Adventure as this?

2. *There is no less hazard least our purposes of Repentance prove abortive and ineffectual thro' our deferring the Execution of 'em.*

'Tis highly probable that our *Resolutions* of returning to God, if we wilfully adjourn that great Work, will gradually *Unbend*. Our *Convictions* if not now follow'd on to a sincere Conversion, will probably *wear off*, and we shall lose the serious *Impression* of 'em. Those languid *Sparks* if not *blown up* into a vital *Flame*, will probably *expire* and *Dye*. Our *Corruptions* after a short restraint and check will grow more *strong* and *violent*, more *rooted* and *fix'd* than before, by thus baffling our present *Convictions* and *Purposes*. And if we will not

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 121

not now hearken while 'tis call'd to Day,
there is great Danger least we shou'd be
hardned thro' the deceitfulness of Sin,
Heb. 3. 13. v. The longer we defer
our Repentance, it becomes the more
difficult and the more improbable. Our
Lusts are more confirm'd by a customary
Course of Sinning; our Consciences be-
come the more seared and insensible, by
our so frequently counteracting their
Light, and silencing their Clamours and
Reproofs: So that by wilfully delaying
our Repentance we run the hazard of
contracting a fatal Obdurateness in Sin;
and of bringing our selves into the de-
plorable Case of those, whose Conver-
sion to God and Holiness, the Prophet
represents to be as unlikely as for the E-
thiopian to change his Skin, and the Leo-
pard his Spots, Jer. 13. 23. And alas,
many thousands of such there are in the
World, who once seem'd to be in a
hopeful way for Conversion, but who
by their wretched Delays of it, have
soon shew'd, that their goodness was but
as the Morning Cloud, and the early Dew
that soon goes away, Hos. 6. 4. Their
good purposes have soon Vanish'd; their
corruptions by trampling on 'em have

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122 On the Parable of the

regain'd and increas'd their Strength; Satan after a seeming Expulsion has return'd and taken more full Possession of 'em; so that they have return'd with the Dog to his vomit, and with the Sow that was wash'd to her wallowing in the Mire, 2 Pet. 2. 22. And shall we by deferring our Repentance run such an apparent hazard of becoming gradually harden'd in Sin to our utter Perdition?

Especially if we consider, that besides the natural tendency of our continuance in Sin, to our being harden'd therein, there is no less danger least a provoked God give us up to the hardness of our own Hearts, and suspend the influences of his forfeited Grace, We may justly fear least his Holy Spirit shou'd Depart from us, when we have long griev'd him by our perverse Resistance; least he shou'd not renew those Convictions we have stifled; and repeat those gracious Motions which we have quench'd, and revive those Resolutions which we have delay'd the Execution of. We may justly fear least an offended God shou'd resolve, That his Holy Spirit shall strive no more with us; least he shou'd say to the Unjust and the Filthy, Let him be so still,

Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 123

still, Rev. 22. 11. Or say of us as once of Ephraim, He is joined to his Idols (To his Lusts.) Let him alone, Hos. 4. 17. And shall we dare to run such a hazard of final rejection by God, of being given up by him to a reprobate Mind, and to an obdurate Heart?

Once more.

3. *There is great hazard if we now wilfully delay our Repentance, lest our Application to God for pardon and acceptance shou'd come too late.*

God therefore requires our *early Return* and *Conversion* to him, because the whole of our *Life* is due to him, and shou'd be employ'd in his *Service*. Now if we by wilfully deferring our *Repentance*, sacrifice the *flower* and *vigour* of our *Age* to *Satan* and our *Lusts*; what reason have we to expect that God will accept the *refuse* and *dregs* of our *Age*? Alas, with what hope can a dying Man offer such *Petitions* as these, “ Lord! Now
“ receive me tho’ I wou’d not think of
“ returning to thee till the last Gasp;
“ Now make me an Object of thy so-
“ vereign Mercy, tho’ I have all my
“ Life dally’d with the offers of it, and
“ come

“ come only to implore it with my dy-
 “ *ing Breath!* I have liv’d the Life of
 “ the Wicked, but O let me dye the
 “ *Death of the Righteous, and let my last*
 “ *End be like his!* Numb. 23. 10. O
 with what anxious fear and trembling
 must such a Dying Person consider that
 awful Threatning, *Because I have call’d*
and ye have refus’d; I have stretched out
my hand, and no Man regarded; but ye
have set at nought all my Counsel, and
would have none of my Reproof; I also
will laugh at your Calamity, and mock
when your fear comes, &c. Then shall
they call upon me but I will not Answer;
They shall seek me early but shall not find
me, Prov. 1. from 24 to 29. v. If you
 think God’s Calls to Repentance come
 too soon for you to comply with ’em;
 beware lest your Calls for Mercy come
 not too late for him to hear. O then
 defer your Conversion to him no longer,
 seek him now while he may be found, and
 call upon him while he is (in the offers
 of his Mercy, and the assistances of his
 Spirit and Grace) *near to you.* Is. 55. 6.

Nay

Nay to add no more.

3. Consider, *That your pretended purposes of Repenting hereafter are meer Hypocrisy and Self-delusion.*

For what is the genuine Language of 'em but this, as if you shou'd say, "I will at present go on in my sinful Course, but I hope and purpose some time or other to be extremely sorry that ever I did so ; I will at present persist in my voluntary Departure from God, but I design some time hereafter to be heartily griev'd for it, and shall be ready to give all the World were it in my power, that I never had done it."

Now 'tis evident that such pretended purposes of future Repentance as these are but *gross Dissimulation*. The purposes of *Sinning now*, and *Repenting hereafter* are *inconsistent* and *Self-contradictory*. So that Men do by such vain purposes both *mock God* and *impose a fatal Delusion* on their own Souls.

O let me then prevail with every convinced Sinner here to put his *Resolutions of Repentance into speedy Execution* ! Let this be the *Day and the accepted Time* for

126 On the Parable of the

for thy returning to God. Now give him the *possession* of thy *Heart*, and devote to him the *service* of thy *Life*. Now enter into his *House* and *Family*, own his *propriety* and *Interest* in thee; subject thy self to his *rightful Authority*; and seek thy *Happiness* in his *favour* and *Love*. O seek him *early*, for he has promis'd, *That such shall find him*, Prov. 8. 17. Look on all that *part* of thy *Life* and *Time* as *lost*, that has been *alienated* from him: O consecrate to him the *remainder* of it; Let not *Satan* by any *pretence* tempt thee to *delay* a *Work* of *so absolute Necessity*, and *so unspeakable Moment*.

But,

Secondly, We shou'd *imitate* this *Prodigal* in the *manner* of our *returning* to God: As,

1. See that your *Return* to God spring from *filial Affection* and *Love* to him.

Revive in your Souls the just sense of his *Authority*, as he is your *Father*; and of the *Duty* you owe to him as you are his *Children*: For there is such a *Relation* which God bears in common to all. He is the *Father* of *Spirits*, Heb. 11.

9. And *we are his Off-spring*, Acts 17. 28. But you are his *Children*, not only as you are the *Work of his Hands*, but as you are a *part of his visible Houshold and Family*. But especially let the contemplation of his Infinite and marvellous Love (express'd in his entertaining Thoughts of Reconciliation and Peace towards you; in his giving his *own Son* to be your *Propitiation*; in extending his Arms to Embrace even such undutiful Prodigals as you have been) melt your Souls into all ingenuous and grateful Affection towards him. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more when I come to consider the *welcome Entertainment* which the *returning Prodigal* met with.

Therefore,

2. See also, *That you return to God with a penitent sense and acknowledgement of your heinous Guilt and great Unworthiness.*

And O with what *Shame and Confusion of Face*; With what *Self-reproaching and Self-condemning Thoughts* shou'd we come back to our Heavenly Father, who are conscious to our selves in how
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128 On the Parable of the

innumerable instances we have offended and griev'd him, and *provok'd the Eyes of his Glory*! How shou'd we blush when we reflect upon all the *impurities and pollutions* of our *Hearts and Lives*, of our *Thoughts and Desires*, our *Words and Actions*! How shou'd we be confounded in the sense of all our *Madness and Folly*, all our *forgetfulness and Neglect of God*, all our shameful *Ingratitude* towards him; all our perverse *contempt* of his *Authority* and his *Commands*! With what *Indignation* and *Self-loathing* shou'd it fill us to think, with what a daring *Insolence* we have violated his *Laws* and provok'd his *Justice*; and especially with how stupid *Obstinacy* and *Unthankfulness* we have spurn'd at the bowels of his *Love*, and slighted the *Compassionate Offers* of it, *Neglected the great Salvation*, and *despis'd the merciful Author* of it! How shou'd we in remembrance of all our *Guilt* and all the sad *aggravations* thereof, with the *poor Publican* be *asham'd to lift up our Faces to Heaven* (against which we have *Sinn'd*) and in deep *Com-punction* *smite upon our Breasts*, and in great anguish of Soul cry out, *Lord*
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be merciful to me a Sinner (to me that infinitely need thy Mercy, tho' most unworthy to partake of it!) *Luk. 18, 13.* How ready shou'd we be in the deepest abasement of Soul to justify the severity of God, shou'd he reject us for ever; and to resent it as an Act of marvellous transcendent Mercy and Grace, if he shou'd receive such as we are into the number of his *reconciled and adopted Children*, who have deserv'd the treatment of *Enemies and Rebels* at his Hand!

And truly the more we feel of such *humility and dejection*, such *remorse and Self-aborrence* in our *return to God* ; the more are we dispos'd to set a due value on the *riches of Divine Grace* in our *pardon and Acceptance* ; the more shall we be affected with the matchless *clemency and pity* of our *Heavenly Father*, that opens his *Compassionate Arms* to receive us ; and the more shall we feel our Hearts inflam'd with *dutiful and grateful Affection* towards him. And indeed it wou'd argue great Ignorance either of the spotless *Holiness* and tremendous *Justice* of that glorious Majesty to whom we profess to Return, or of our own *guilt* and the *Aggravations*

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thereof, shou'd we come back to him in any other frame than that of *penitential shame and Sorrow, Self-loathing, and Self-judging*. And 'tis such a *Penitent* that is a fit Object to move the bowels of Divine Pity. He will not *upbraid* us with those Follies with which we thus *upbraid our selves*. He will not *abhor* us when we thus *Abhor our selves*; we shall be *pleasing in his Eyes*, when we are thus *vile in our own*; and when we thus *penitently Judge our selves*, we shall not be *Judged in a way of rigour and Severity by him*, 1 Cor. 11. 37.

But,

3. *Let us see that we return to God with a sincere willingness to comply with any terms of Mercy whatsoever.*

And sure if we have any due sense of our own wretched and perishing Condition while we are in a state of enmity and estrangement from God, if we understand how high an *Honour* and unspeakable an *Advantage* it is to be *adopted into his Family*, and own'd as his *Children*, we shall never think any *Conditions* of our Interest in such inestimable Privileges too *hard*; much less shall

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Serm. IV. *Prodigal Son.* 131

we think so of such *gracious* and *con-*
scending ones as the Gospel propounds.
O let us then be freely willing to abandon every darling Luit, to give every Sin a Bill of perpetual Divorce; let us freely submit to the Authority and engage in the Service of our Heavenly Father; let us resolve to *live to him*, to *obey him*, and to *seek our final Happiness in him*: Let us *enter* into his *Family*, voluntarily come under his *Government* and *Con-*
duct, and decline no part of our Duty whatever *difficulty* or *Self-denial*, or *hazard* may attend our faithful discharge of it. — We should be even ready to *sub-*
scribe a Blank, and leave it to him to set down what *Conditions* he *pleases*. We shou'd entirely devote and give up our selves to him, without any *Limitations* and *Reserves*, as being fully persuaded, *We are never more happily our own, than when we are most Absolutely His.*

F I N I S.

On the Parable of
The Prodigal.

SERM. V.

LUKE, Chap. XV.

Verf. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

20. And he arose and came to his Father.
But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell on his Neck and Kissed him.

21. And the Son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

22. But the Father said to his Servants; Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his Feet, &c.

HAVING trac'd the *Prodigal* in his *voluntary Departure* from his *Father*, and represented to you the *miserable* and *wretched Condition* into which his *Folly* and *riotous Course* of living had brought him. I did in the two last *Discourses* open to you a more *bright* and *desirable Scene*, and represented this *foolish Prodigal* at last coming to himself, *lamenting* his *Folly* and *Misery*, *enter-taining serious Resolutions* of returning to his *Father* (and that with all *dutiful Affection* with a *penitent Acknowledgement* of his past *Guilt*, with a *sincere readiness* to comply with any *Terms* on which he might be readmitted to *Favour*.) and what is most *considerable*, putting those good *Resolutions* without any *delay* into *speedy Execution*. And in all these *particulars* I propos'd him as a *fit Pattern* for the *Imitation* of every *convinc'd* and *relenting Sinner* in his *penitent return* to *God*. I proceed now to the

IVth Branch of the *Parable*, viz. To consider the *welcome reception* which the *Prodigal* met with from his *Father* upon his *penitent Return* to him. And

And no doubt, it was the Design of our Blessed Saviour herein to represent to us the *Acceptance* and the *gracious Entertainment* that every *relenting Sinner* shall meet with from his *Heavenly Father* upon his *Return* to him by *sincere Repentance*.

And truly when we consider the *aggravated Guilt* of a *prodigal Sinner*, the *provocations* and *affronts* that he offers to the Blessed God; and then contemplate how the *Bowels* of his offended Father *work towards him*; in what *manner* he *receives him*; with what *surprizing marks* of *Affection* and *Joy* he *Embraces him*; and what *marvellous favours* and *privileges* he *confers upon him*; it may very well raise our *Wonder* and *Astonishment*; it may justly possess us with *adoring Thoughts* of the *boundless Compassions* of the Blessed God, and fully convince us, *That his ways are not as our ways, nor his Thoughts as our's, but as far above 'em, as the Heavens are above the Earth.* If. 55. 8, 9.

And that we may entertain more suitable conceptions of the *admirable Mercy* of God towards a *returning Sinner*, and of the *welcome Reception* and *Enter-*

136 On the Parable of the

tainment he may expect. I shall consider the several *steps* and *gradations* of it, that are here represented in this part of the *Parable*; all which highly tend both to *inhance* the *Mercy* of God, and to *encourage* our *penitent Return* to him:

As,

First, From that Expression, That *when the prodigal Son was yet a great way off, his Father saw him and had Compassion on him.* We may observe, *How exactly our Heavenly Father takes notice of the first motions of a penitent Sinner towards him; and how early the Bowels of Divine Compassion yearn and work towards him.*

Secondly, From his *running to meet him*, we may observe, *How God's readiness to readmit a returning Sinner to his favour does even prevent his penitent Application and Suit for it.*

Thirdly, From his *falling on his Neck and Kissing him*, without ever upbraiding him with his Folly; we may observe, *How free and full the Exercise of Divine Mercy is in forgiving a penitent Sinner, and restoring him to his favour.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, From the *Prodigal's* ingenious *Confession* of his *Guilt* and *Unworthiness*, we may infer, *What* ingenious impression *God's* pardoning *Mercy* shou'd make on the *Heart* of a returning and pardon'd *Sinner*, to melt it into deeper sorrow and self-abasement.

Fifthly, From the marks of *Affection* and *favour* which the *Father* here shew'd to the returning *Prodigal*, we may observe, *That* a gracious *God* does not only forgive a returning *Sinner*, but confers eminent *Privileges* and *Benefits* upon him.

Sixthly, From the *Joy* here express'd upon the *Prodigal's* return, we may infer, *That* the *Conversion* of a *Sinner* is matter of the *Highest Satisfaction* and *Joy* to the *Blessed God*, and shou'd be so to all that are in his *Family* and *Houſhold*.

Of theſe in their Order: And,

First, From that Expression, that when the *prodigal Son* was yet a great way off, his *Father* ſaw him, and had *Compaſſion* on him, we may observe, *How* exactly our *Heavenly Father* takes notice of the first motions of a penitent *Sinner* towards him, and how early his bowels of *Compaſſion* yearn and work towards him. As

As for *Earthly Fathers*, their bowels are not usually so easily mov'd and stirr'd, when disobedient Children have by great provocations alienated their Affections, and as it were hardned their Hearts against 'em. Perhaps indeed, when they see 'em actually prostrate at their Feet, and with *sighs* and *tears* and all the marks of grief and shame imploring their Pity and Forgiveness, they may then feel some *Emotions of Compassion*, but the *Object* is not wont to affect 'em so strongly *at a distance*. But such are the boundless Compassions of our Heavenly Father, that he does as it were with some impatience *watch* and *wait* for a fit Opportunity to Exercise 'em. And therefore a poor Sinner no sooner entertains any *relenting Thoughts* in his mind, he no sooner cherishes any *sincere purposes* of Conversion in his Heart; he no sooner *takes the least step* in his return towards God, but his vigilant Eye observes all these Motions, and that with inward Pleasure and Satisfaction, and with suitable correspondent Motions of *paternal Affection* and *Tenderness* on his part. Does the Sinner's Heart *relent* and *melt* towards God?

So

So does the *Heart* of his offended Father *relent* and *melt* towards him. Does the sinner feel an inward *Compunction of Soul* for his Offences that he cannot be at rest 'till he return to God? So does his Heavenly Father feel as it were an *uneasy Emotion* in his own Breast 'till he Embrace him, and assure him of his Pardon and Favour. Does the Sinner form in his mind the Project and Design of coming back to God? So does his Father's pity put him on the Project and Design of bringing about an actual Reconciliation; or (to speak more properly) it puts him on executing that merciful Project and Design of reconciling such a Sinner to himself which he had form'd in his Eternal Counsels and Purposes. Does *Ephraim* in his penitent Reflections *bemoan himself*, and say, *Thou hast Chastised me, and I was Chastised, as a Bullock unaccustom'd to the Yoke, turn thou me, and I shall be turned?* Does he repent and smite upon his Thigh? He no sooner thus laments himself, but a gracious God saith, *Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself* (I have attentively hearken'd to his penitent Confessions and Cries.) And see how

140 *On the Parable of the*

how the Heart of a Compassionate Father works towards him. *Is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleasant Child? For since I spake against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have Mercy upon him, saith the Lord, Jer. 31. 18, 19, 20.* See how the Truth of this Observation was exemplify'd in this admirable Instance of Divine Compassion: But,

Secondly, From the Father's running to meet the prodigal Son, we may observe, *How God's readiness to readmit a Returning Sinner to his Favour, does even prevent his penitent Application and Suit to him for it.*

He no sooner saw him on his way Home, but when he was *as far off* he ran to meet him.

This is by no means usual with earthly Parents when they have receiv'd great Provocations from their undutiful Children, that run from their Family, and *wast their Substance in riotous living.* Tho' they may hear of their being Penitent, and may feel some stirrings of natural Affection and Pity towards 'em, yet they think it more prudent and requisite

Serm. V. *Prodigal Son.* 141

quisite for maintaining their Authority, and expressing their just Displeasure, to refuse 'em any *immediate access* into their Presence. They are wont to conceal those Sentiments of Pity which they do really feel: And such an offending Child must make use of powerful *Friends* or *Relations* to *intercede* for him; and 'tis not usually 'till after earnest *Intreaty* and *Application* that a *provoked Parent* will see such a *prodigal Son*, or admit him to speak to him, and beg his Forgiveness. But see here, how far the Bowels of Divine Pity transcend those of human Compassion. Our Offended heavenly Father *runs* with an early hast and speed to *meet* a returning prodigal Sinner: And indeed so far do his Compassions prevent the Exercise of a Sinner's *Repentance*, that while we voluntarily depart from him, and entertain no thoughts of a penitent Return, he then form'd the Project of Reconciliation, sent his own Son to obtain it at the expence of his Blood; sent his Messengers after us with a gracious Call and Invitation to return to his House, with the merciful Offer and assurance of a free Pardon and a welcome Reception upon our sincere
Conversion,

142 On the Parable of the

version, and with the most earnest solicitation to accept these gracious Proposals. His *Intreaties* to us to be reconcill'd are *antecedent* to our *penitent Suit* to him for Pardon and Peace: And this is more than even the *Prodigal's* Father in my Text is said to have done; unless we suppose something of this hinted in his *running to meet him*. But doubtless the Expression was chiefly design'd to intimate to us, That God is more *intent* upon this gracious Design of Reconciliation than we are. He is more *ready to forgive* than *we* are to *return*. He is more forward in the Exercise of his pardoning Mercy, than we are in the Exercise of unfeigned *Repentance* and earnest Application for it.

'Tis no way hard or difficult with God to forgive a relenting Sinner, tho' it be so hard and tedious a Work to bring him into a truly penitent frame and disposition. The *Prodigal* arose and came to his Father, But his Father ran to meet him. So much more strong and quick were the motions of his paternal Affection. Alas we are slow and backward, and express a strange Reluctancy in our penitent Return to God:

'Tis

'Tis not 'till after a tedious conflict with our dis-inclined Hearts that we usually come to a fixed Determination about it. But no sooner are we in Motion, but his *Mercy flies* as it were with a winged speed; it *prevents* our *Requests* with its gracious *Offers*; it meets us on our way with a *sealed Pardon* in its *Hand*; it grants our suit for Reconciliation and Peace before we have time to utter it. Our heavenly Father notwithstanding all the Affronts we have put upon him, feels no Aversion and Reluctancy in his own Breast in the Exercise of his Mercy towards an Object meet for it by unfeigned *Repentance*, but rather a forward propension thereto.

O how astonishing are these Methods of Divine Pity towards such provoking Sinners! and how far beyond the ordinary Instances of the tenderest Compassion in earthly Parents! Especially if we consider farther,

Thirdly, From the Father's *falling on the Neck* of his *prodigal Son* and *Kissing* him, without ever Upbraiding him with his past Guilt, we may observe, *How free and full the Exercise of*

144 *On the Parable of the*

of Divine Mercy is in forgiving a relenting Sinner, and restoring him to his Favour.

For the Father's *falling on his Neck*, his *Embracing* and *Kissing* him, was an evident Mark of an *entire Forgiveness* and *Reconciliation*; that he had pardon'd all that was past, and did now receive him into favour again.

Now we may observe, that this is not the usual way that *earthly Parents* are wont to treat such rebellious and prodigal Children. The *prodigal Son* might reasonably have expected that his *Father* at the first interview wou'd have receiv'd him with *Frowns*, and not with *Smiles*; that he wou'd have entertain'd him with severe *Reproaches* for all his *Disobedience* and *Perverseness*, his *Folly* and *Ingratitude*. He might well expect to hear some such Language as this,
 " Go back, thou *Rebel*, to thy *Harlots* and
 " thy *jovial Company*, and let them now
 " maintain thee, among whom thou
 " hast *wasted thy Substance in riotous*
 " *Living*; or return to thy *churlish*
 " *Master*, that he may *send thee again*
 " *to his Fields to keep his Swine*, and
 " *feed with them on the Husks*; the
 " *Em-*

“ *Employment and the fare is good enough* for such a *Spend-thrift* as thou hast been. Such a severe *Lecture* as this he might well think his angry Father wou’d *read* him. But you see there is not one Word to any such purpose : His *Father* receives him with a *smiling* and not a *frowning* Countenance; instead of bidding him begone out of his sight, he embraces him with a transport of tender Affection; Nay treats him as if all his *past Offences* were entirely *forgotten and buried*.

And such is the *Treatment* that a Returning Sinner finds at the Hand of a gracious God. He does not *upbraid* him with his past Guilt, he does not *terrify* him with severe *Menaces*; No, he treats him as if he had never offended. He *casts all his Offences behind his Back, nay into the bottom of the Sea*, Micah 7. 19. He *blots ’em out as a cloud and as a thick cloud*. He *remembers ’em no more*, but immediately receives him into his compassionate Arms; owns and accepts him as his Child, and speaks no other Language to him but that reviving one; *Be of good Cheer, for thy Iniquities are forgiven.* Matth. 9. 2. All

the Sinner's past Provocations are buried in perpetual Oblivion. All his *crimson* and *scarlet Guilt* is *wash'd away* by an Act of gracious *Absolution*; And now an entire *Amity* and *Peace* is *restor'd*, a happy *Reconciliation* is *made up*. There passes nothing between a *Reconcil'd Father* and his *Returning Child* but *Expressions* of the greatest *Endearment* and *Love*, and the highest *Assurances* on the *Father's* part of entire *Forgiveness* and *tenderest Affection*. O the marvellous and transcendent *Mercy* of God, that can pass by so aggravated *Guilt* without ever reproaching the Sinner with it, and can restore him to all the marks of favour and welcome *Acceptance* after he had done so much to render himself unworthy of it!

But tho' a *Gracious God* so entirely *forgive* a *relenting Sinner*, it may be justly expected, that he will not so easily *forgive himself*; and the more his heavenly Father seems to *forget* his *Faults*, the more he will *penitently remember* 'em himself. And therefore,

Fourthly, From the *Prodigal's* ingenuous *Confession* of his *Guilt* and great *Unworthiness*, we may infer, *What ingenu-*

genuous Impressions God's pardoning Mercy shou'd make on the Heart of a returning and pardon'd Sinner to melt it into deep Sorrow and self-Abasement.

Tho' the Prodigal found himself in his Father's Compassionate Arms, and Embrac'd with all the marks of tender Affection, yet the Assurance of his Father's Love did the more powerfully excite in his Heart all the workings of shame and sorrow, of humility and confusion, of a just Abhorrence of and Indignation against himself. And tho' his Father was entirely silent as to any Reproaches he might have expected upon his first appearing before him, he is not silent himself, but the more free and ingenuous in his penitential Confessions: *Father, I have sinn'd against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Child,* Vers. 21.

And such shou'd be the temper and carriage of a penitent Sinner in his Return to God. The more freely he is forgiven, the more shou'd he be ashamed and grieved that he has so dishonour'd and displeas'd so Gracious a Father. The more he finds the Bowels of Divine Compassion yearning over

him, and covering all his past hainous Guilt with a vail of Mercy, the more shou'd his Heart dissolve into penitential Tears, and even abhor it self for its inexcusable Provocations.

The more he experiences the Love of a *Father reviv'd* towards him, notwithstanding all his undutiful and disobliging carriage, the more strong shou'd the *motions* of *filial Love* be in him; venting it self in ingenuous *Remorse* for all his Offences, in *bitter* and *self-condemning Reflections* on his own Disobedience and Ingratitude, and deep Resolution *to return to such folly no more*. He shou'd feel something of that temper and spirit which God by the Prophet intimates shou'd be in his pardon'd People; *That thou may'st remember and be confounded and never open thy Mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacify'd towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God, Ezek. 16. 63.*

But of this more will occur in the *Application*.

Fifthly, From the many marks of Favour which the Father shew'd to the Returning Prodigal, we may observe,

That

That a gracious God does not only forgive a returning Sinner, but conferrs eminent Privileges and Benefits upon him.

The *Prodigal's Father* not only forgave him, and readmitted him into his favour and family, but restor'd him to all the privileges, to all the marks of *Esteem* and *Respect* that belong'd to a *Dutiful Child*. He came home doubtless in a *naked* or *ragged Condition*; but the *Father* calls for the *best robe* to be brought forth and put upon him, and for a *Ring* to put on his *Hand*, and *Shoes* upon his *Feet*. He came Home ready to *perish with Hunger*; and the *Father* calls for the *fatted Calf* to be kill'd, that he might entertain him upon his *Return* with a *welcome Feast*.

And doubtless this part of the Parable represents to us, That a *gracious God* not only pardons a *returning Prodigal*, but restores him to all the *dignity* and all the *priviledges* of a *dutiful* and *beloved Child*. For to wear such a *long Robe*, to wear a *Ring on the Hand*, and *Shoes on the Feet*, was the *mark* of *Children*, not of *Servants*, nay a *mark* of such as were *considerable* for their *Rank* and *Quality*.

I know some *Expositors* have been so particular, as to interpret each Expression of some particular spiritual Privilege that God's reconciled Children are restored unto. As by the *best Robe*, some have understood the *Righteousness of Christ* by the merit whereof we are *Justify'd*, and our *nakedness cover'd*. Others have understood by it, that *inward Holiness*, that beautiful *Image of God* whereby our Souls are in our *regeneration Adorn'd*. And this is frequently compar'd to *white Robes*, and to *fine Linnen*. See Rev. 19. 8. v. So by the *Ring or Signet* on his Hand, *Grotius* understands the *Gift of God's indwelling Spirit*, by which we are *Seal'd to the Day of Redemption*. And by the *Shoes on his Feet*, the same *Expositor* understands his being instrumental in the Conversion of others. So by the *fatted Calf* some understand our *Blessed Saviour* the spiritual *Repast* of our Souls; others the *Joys of the Holy Spirit*.

But I see no reason why we shou'd too anxiously seek or pursue such Allusions that are more fanciful than Solid. It seems every way sufficient to observe, That as the *prodigal's Father* did by no means

means treat him upon his Return according to his former Deserts; but on the contrary not only *pardon'd* him, but plac'd all imaginable *marks of Favour and Respect* upon him, *restoring* him to all the *honour and priviledges* of a *Child* in his Family, notwithstanding his having been an *Undutiful one*. So does a merciful God, not only not *punish* a returning Sinner, but on the contrary he *heaps* on him all the *marks of paternal Affection*; he put him into the happy *Circumstances* of a *favourite Child*; he makes him a *sharer* in all the *dignity and priviledges* which belong to that *Relation*, notwithstanding his having render'd himself so *unworthy* of 'em.

So that we may suppose all the *Priviledges* I mention'd before as included. When a compassionate God *receives* a *returning Penitent*, he not only *forgives* his past Provocations, but he *accepts* and *owns* him as his *Child*, in his beloved Son, *Eph. 1. 6.* Nay he *sends his Holy Spirit into his Heart*, *Gal. 4. 6.* He *adorns his Soul* with his *amiable Image*; he *Seals him by his Holy Spirit to the Day of Redemption*; he gives him free-

152 *On the Parable of the*
dom of access to his Throne of Grace;
he entertains him with all the rich *pro-*
visions of his House and Family ; he
replenishes his Soul with spiritual Conso-
lations and Joys ; he makes him an Heir
of the Heavenly Inheritance , he makes
a most happy change in his *Condition*
and *State ; He that was before almost*
spiritually Naked, is now richly Adorn'd;
he that was before almost *famish'd, is*
now plentifully *feasted, nay has Bread*
enough in his Father's House and to spare;
he that was before *Dead is now made*
alive ; he that was lost is happily found.

I shou'd have entred on the
Sixth Observation, *viz.* That from
the Joy here exprest upon the Prodigal's
Return, we may observe, *That the Con-*
version of a Sinner is matter of the high-
est Satisfaction and Joy to the Blessed
God, and shou'd be so to all that belong
to his Household and Family.

But the Consideration of that will
require a distinct Discourse.

I shall therefore now *Improve the five*
foregoing Observations, and that in the
two following Uses.

Serm. V. *Prodigal Son.* 153

I. I wou'd hence Address my self to every *unconverted Ungodly Sinner*, and make use of what has been deliver'd as an *Argument and Motive* to serious *Repentance and Conversion*.

And the Contemplation of that *welcome Reception* which the *returning Prodigal* met with, shou'd incite you to a *sincere return to God*.

Partly, *As it is a great encouragement to return to God*.

Partly, *As 'tis a strong Obligation to return in point of Gratitude*.

Partly, *As it represents it to be your own undoubted Interest*.

1. The Contemplation of that *welcome Reception* the *returning Prodigal* met with, is a *very powerful Encouragement to return to God*.

If indeed a *Sinner* that is conscious to himself of his being guilty of great Provocations, had to do with an *implacable Enemy* or *inexorable Judge*, it were no wonder if absolute *Despair* of Mercy shou'd render him *Obstinate*, and shou'd stifle all motions of Repentance in his Breast. But this, O *Sinner*! is by no means thy Case. Thy Condition is so far from being thus *hopeless*, that
thou

thou canst not desire more satisfying Assurance of pardon and gracious Acceptance upon thy penitent Return.

Thou hast to do with a gracious *Father*, whose Compassions infinitely transcend all Bowels of human Pity; and whose *ways and thoughts of Mercy are far above the ways and thoughts of Man*. He watches to observe if there be any *relenting and self-condemning thoughts* cherish'd in thy Mind, any *purposes of sincere Conversion* harbour'd in thy Breast. And he no sooner discerns 'em, but there are some correspondent *Relentings* in his Breasts, some *yearnings* in his Bowels, some *Emotions of Pity and Compassion* in his Heart towards thee: No sooner canst thou take *one step* in thy way towards him, but he *runs to meet thee*, and is more forward and ready to exercise his pardoning Mercy than thou art to seek and implore it with a penitent Heart. Nor needst thou fear either his angry Frowns or his avenging Hand; He will not so much as *upbraid* thee with thy past folly, or put thee to the blush with his grievous cutting Reproaches: On the contrary, all thy provocations shall be forgotten and o-

ver-

verlook'd : He will stretch out his Compassionate Arms to embrace thy returning Soul; and welcome it with the most endearing Expressions of paternal Affection and Love. Nor shall thy past Guilt how great soever exclude thee from the Dignity of his *Children*, or from any of the invaluable Privileges of his Family. And canst thou have greater Encouragement to return then the Assurance of so *welcome a Reception* as this? O let not then thy guilty Fears keep thee back, and tempt thee in sullen despondency to flee from such a compassionate Father, and to continue a voluntary Exile from his House.

What tho' thy Guilt be great and aggravated? his Mercy is Infinite and boundless. What tho' thy Offences and Provocations have been numberless? there is in him a *multitude of Mercies* to forgive and *cover the multitude of thy Sins*; and if the *Wicked will forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous his Thoughts and turn unto the Lord, he will have Mercy upon him and abundantly pardon him* (or multiply to Pardon, as he has multiplied to Offend, as
the

156 *On the Parable of the*

the Original imports) *If. 55. 7.* What tho' thy Iniquities have abounded when his Grace can super-abound? What tho' thy *Debts* be as *Ten-thousand Talents*, for *Number* and *Aggravation*, when his Infinite Compassion can forgive 'em all? () let then such satisfying grounds of Hope concerning thy welcome Acceptance, overcome all the Jealousies and Fears of thy mis-giving Mind, and encourage thee to come and cast thy guilty Soul upon the boundless Mercy of God, to prostrate thy self at his Feet, nay to throw thy self into those Compassionate Arms which he *opens* to Embrace thee. To doubt of forgiveness and restoration to his Favour after such a Declaration of his Gracious Nature, wou'd be inexcusable Unbelief; and at once offer the greatest affront both to his *Mercy* and to his *Truth*. But further.

2. The Contemplation of that *welcome Reception* which the *returning Prodigal* met with, *shou'd highly oblige you to return to God in point of gratitude.*

Shall that offended Majesty that might glorify his Justice every moment in your deserv'd Ruin, wait to be gracious to you; and shall not the *riches of his Good-*

Goodness and Long-suffering lead you to Repentance? Shall he invite you to return with the freest offers of Pardon, and the highest assurance of a gracious Acceptance, and will you despise the invaluable offers of that sovereign Mercy that you stand in so infinite need of, and without which you are likely to be remedilessly Miserable, and that for ever? Shall his bowels of Compassion thus yearn towards you, and your hearts never relent and melt towards him? Shall there be such workings of *pater-nal Love* in his Breast, and no motions of *filial Affections* in yours? Is he ready to *run* and *meet* your returning Souls, and are you so slow and backward to take the least step towards him? Are his Arms of infinite Mercy extended to receive you, and will not you whose Guilt needs such a Sanctuary from eternal Vengeance, flee into 'em? Is he so desirous to restore you to the *Dignity* and *Privileges* of his Children, and will you treat the offer of so inestimable a Favour with contempt and scorn? O amazing *Dis-ingenuity* and *Ingratitude*! How justly will those perish under the remediless Vengeance of God, who
thus

158 *On the Parable of the*

thus despise his tenderest Compassions and Love! How will those become the unpitied Objects of his inexorable Justice, who refus'd to become the happy Objects of his pardoning Mercy! What can those expect but the utmost severity who thus affront and spurn at the Bowels of Divine Pity!

But,

3. The Contemplation of the *welcome Reception* which the *returning Prodigal* met with, shou'd convince every *Ungodly Sinner* that 'tis his highest Interest to return to God.

Mistake not *Sinner*, as if the Blessed God were so solicitous for thy Return from any real *Advantage* or *Benefit* that he can propole to himself by it. His Happiness and Essential Glory will suffer no *diminution* by thy continued *Disobedience* and by thy *deserved Ruin*, nor can it receive any *Addition* by thy *penitent Return*: No, 'tis thy own *Advantage* and *Interest*, thy *welfare* and *Salvation* that he seeks, and is so earnestly intent upon. He is only solicitous to glorify his Mercy in thy restoration to his Favour and Family, and in that real
Happi-

Serm. V. *Prodigal Son.* 159

Happiness that will thereby redound to thy self. 'Tis thy *Condemnation and Misery* and *everlasting Perdition* that he seeks to prevent. And shall a gracious God be so tenderly concern'd for thy everlasting Welfare, and wilt thou be stupidly Negligent of thy *own*? Shall he offer thee Pardon and Forgiveness, and wilt thou refuse it, who without it must certainly Perish forever? Shall he be willing to restore thee to his Favour, and wilt thou who dost Infinitely need it, and whose Welfare entirely depends upon it, slight the free tender of it? Is he willing to Adopt thee into his Family, and invest thee in all the privileges of his Children, and are these inestimable Advantages so despicable in thine Eyes, that thou shou'd think 'em unworthy of thy thankful Acceptance?

What hadst thou rather *attend Swine* and *feed with them on Husks*, than dwell in his House and share in the plentiful Provisions thereof! Hadst thou rather continue in thy *rags and nakedness*, than to wear the beautiful *Ornaments and Garb* of his Children? Hadst thou rather continue an ignominious and wretched Slave of Satan and Sin, and
Heir

160 *On the Parable of the*

Heir of Hell, than become a reconciled Child of God, and Heir of Heaven ! O the astonishing *stupidity* and *folly* of impenitent Sinners that so apparently counter-act their own Interest ! that in fleeing from a gracious God flee from their own Happiness ? That by their refusing to return to him prefer the servitude of Sin before the Liberty of his Children ; and the misery of an *unhappy Exile* before all the *Privileges* of his *House and Family* ! That prefer Vengeance and Wrath, Death and Hell, before Pardon and Peace, Heaven and Salvation ?

If then, O foolish Sinner, either the assurance of God's Forgiveness and Favour can *encourage* thee to return to him, or the obligations of Gratitude can *attract* thy Heart, or the Sense and Conviction of thy own Interest can *prevail* with thee. Let all these Arguments persuade thee to resolve upon a sincere Conversion to God, and to put thy resolves into speedy Execution. Let thy own *Necessity* force and *drive* thee. Let his *infinite Compassion* invite and *draw* thee to him, and never rest till thou dost with a relenting Heart cast thy self upon his

his boundless Mercy, and dost find thy self embrac'd in his Arms of Love. O may some *Prodigals* be this Day brought home to God, and from this very season date their happy return to Him!

But,

II. I wou'd hence Address my self to those that *have return'd to God*, and have experienc'd this transcendent Mercy of his in their *pardon and restoration to his Favour*.

And on such I wou'd urge three things by way of Advice.

I. *Adore that infinite and marvellous Mercy of God that you have Experienc'd.*

We may well think that the *Prodigal* in my Text wou'd be strangely surpriz'd and deeply affected with such a treatment from his offended Father, so contrary to all reasonable Expectation. With what admiration and thankfulness wou'd it fill his Heart, that instead of severe Punishment, or angry Frowns, or at least reproachful and cutting Language which he had so much deserv'd, he shou'd meet with nothing but gracious Smiles, and most tender Embraces, and all imaginable Expressions of paternal Affection.

162. *On the Parable of the*

tion and Love ! O how wou'd such unusual Pity and preventing Love melt and ravish his Heart, and make him stand amaz'd at the kind usage he receiv'd so contrary to his just Deserts ?

And shall not we feel something of the like emotions of Wonder and Gratitude in our reflections upon the dealings of our Heavenly Father with us ? Shou'd it not deeply affect our Hearts, that tho' we like foolish *Prodigals* had wandred from him ; that tho' we like *undutiful Children* had been guilty of most hainous Offences that might have provok'd him to have cast us off forever ; yet no sooner did we entertain the Thoughts and Purposes of returning to him, but he (whose Grace excited those very Motions in us) observ'd 'em with a favourable Eye, and not only assisted us in our endeavours, but gave us the most welcome Reception, forgiving all our past Guilt, without ever reproaching us with it ; restoring us as entirely to his Favour as if we had never offended, *Justifying us thro' the Redeemer's Blood*, *adorning us with the Graces of his Holy Spirit*, admitting us into his *Family and Church*, feeding us with the
rich

Serm. V. *Prodigal Son.* 163

rich Provisions of his House, training us up by the continual cultivation of his Grace for the glories of his Heavenly Kingdom, and giving us here not only a Title to, but the most precious earnest and pledge of that glorious Inheritance that is reserv'd for our endless and sure Possession?

O the astonishing Wonders of Divine Mercy and Love! The unsearchable Riches of his Grace! Is this the treatment that Enemies and Rebels might expect at the Hands of an incens'd Sovereign? Is this the carriage that Disobedient and Prodigal Children might look for from a Father whom they had done so much to provoke and disoblige! Have we not here the most convincing Demonstration of the Truth of what he professes concerning himself, That he has no pleasure in the Death of a Sinner that Dies, but rather that he shou'd turn and Live, Ezek. 18. 2. last. v.

And shall not we be guilty of most inexcusable Ingratitude, if we do not admire such unparallel'd Compassion as this? If we that have found such matchless Pity towards us in the Breast of our heavenly Father, shou'd not also find

and feel *Divine Love shed abroad in our Hearts*, and our Souls brought under the ingenuous *constraints* of it? Shall not we ardently *love Him*, when we have *so much* and that *so freely forgiven*? And shall not we meditate such returns of filial Duty as may be answerable to such Obligations as his paternal Affection has laid upon us? But,

2. Let the sense of your welcome reception upon your penitent Return to God, *promote in you the deeper Exercises of ingenious Repentance*.

And truly if we have any principles of *Ingenuity* in our Hearts, the *freeness* and *riches* of Divine Grace in our Pardon and Acceptance after so great provocations will melt us into shame and Self-abhorrence, and fill us with just Indignation against our own Folly and Ingratitude. The more ready a gracious God is to forgive us, we shou'd be more hard to *forgive our Selves*; the more he forbears to reproach us, the more shou'd our own Hearts smite us, that ever we shou'd carry it so undutifully towards so compassionate a Father. We shou'd be ready to say, "Is this the gracious God whom I have so greatly Offended and

Dis-

“ Dishonour’d, from whom I have so
 “ perversly gone astray, and whom I
 “ have been so unwilling to Return to?
 “ O what excuse or apology can I make
 “ for all my obstinate and dis-ingenu-
 “ ous Carriage towards him, who has
 “ notwithstanding all my provocations
 “ express’d such tenderness of paternal
 “ Affection towards me? How shou’d
 we cry out with the relenting Prodigal,
Father I have sinn’d against Heaven and
before thee, and am no more worthy to
be call’d thy Son? v. 21.

3. Let us rejoyce in the happy change
 that is made in our State upon our sin-
 cere Return to God:

But of that there will be more occa-
 sion to speak under the sixth and last Ob-
 servation.

“ I N I S.

On the Parable of
The Prodigal.

SE R M. VIth
And LAST.

LUKE, Chap. XV.

Verf. 22, 23, 24.

22. But the Father said to his Servants;
Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him,
and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his
Feet

23. And bring hither the fatted Calf, and
kill it, and let us eat and be merry.

24. For this my Son was dead and is alive
again; he was lost and is found. And they
began to be merry, &c. —

I Have already consider'd the,
 I. The *Prodigal's* voluntary *Departure from his Father*: And,
 II. The *miserable and wretched Condition* that his *Folly* brought him into.

I then,

III. Consider'd him as *coming to himself and returning to his Father*: And,

IV. I proceeded to Consider, *The welcome reception and entertainment which the Prodigal met with from his Father upon his penitent Return to him.*

And here I observ'd several particulars worthy of our Remark and serious Consideration.

First, From the *Father's* seeing him a great way off, &c. I observ'd, *How exactly our Heavenly Father takes notice of the first motions of a penitent Sinner towards him, and how early the Bowels of his Compassion work towards him.*

Secondly, I observ'd from the *Father's* running to meet him, how *God's* readiness to readmit a penitent Sinner to his Favour, does even prevent his humble Application and Suit to him for it.

Third.

Serm. VI. *Prodigal Son.* 169

Thirdly, I observ'd from the *Father's falling on his Neck, &c.* How free and full the exercise of *Divine Mercy* is in the forgiveness and acceptance of a *relenting Sinner*.

Fourthly, From the *Prodigal's ingenuous Confession*, I observ'd, *What ingenuous impressions God's pardoning Mercy shou'd make on the Heart of a returning and pardon'd Sinner* to melt him into deeper sorrow and *Self-abasement*.

Fifthly, From the manifold marks of *Affection* which the *Father* shew'd to the prodigal Son upon his Return, I observ'd, *That a gracious God does not only forgive a returning Penitent, but confers eminent Priviledges and Benefits upon him.*

These Observations I Consider'd, and made some practical Improvement of in the last Discourse ; I come now in the

Sixth and last Place, From the Joy that was here express'd by the *Father* and by his *Family* upon this occasion of the prodigal's Return, to observe, *That the Conversion of a Sinner to God is matter of the highest Satisfaction and Delight to him, and shou'd be so to all that belong to his Household and Family.* It

It was the *Father's* Order and Command, that on this occasion they shou'd exprefs their *Mirth* by a joyful *Feast*, which accordingly was comply'd with, and he justifies their being *merry* and *joyful* on this Occasion by assigning the solid Ground of it. *For this my Son was Dead and is alive again, was lost, and is found.* Nay when the elder Brother envied the *Prodigal's* welcome Reception, and seem'd to be disturb'd and griev'd at the Joy exprefs'd on this Occasion, the *Father* gently rebukes his envious temper, by alledging this very justifiable Occasion of it, *It was meet (saith he) that we shou'd make merry and be glad, for this thy Brother was dead and is now alive, was lost and is found.* See v. ult.

I shall therefore in speaking to this Subject

I. Consider, What is included in the *Conversion of a Sinner* as the ground of this Joy, viz. *That one who was Dead, is now made Alive, one who was Lost, is now found again.*

II. I shall shew how justifiable a ground this is of the highest Joy ;

And

And then I shall apply the whole.

I. I shall consider what is here included in the *Conversion of a Sinner* as the ground of this Joy, viz. That thereby *one that was Dead is made Alive, and one that was lost is found again.*

And here in speaking to this Head I shall not consider the Doctrine of *Conversion* at large, but only consider the change made in the *Nature and State*, in the *Life and Practise* of a true *Convert*, as 'tis very emphatically represented in those Expressions of the Text. For you may observe in 'em, That,

Before his Conversion he is represented as *Dead and Lost.*

Upon his Conversion, he is represented as *made Alive, and found again.*

First, A *Sinner before his Conversion* is represented as *Dead and Lost.*

And both these Expressions include a very significant and lively Description of his wretched Case, and we may consider 'em apart, tho' the Case is the same only under different Allusions.

1. A *Sinner before his Conversion* is represented as *Dead.*

Now 'tis evident, this does not import, that he was devoyd of natural Life.

Life. For the *Prodigal* himself was not in this sense *Dead*, when he was gone from his Father, and *spending his Substance in riotous Living*. Nor does it import, that a *Sinner* in his unconverted State is devoyd of all *capacity* of being *restor'd to spiritual Life*, no more than the *Prodigal* was incapable of being *made Alive* in the sense and in the account of his Father. No, the *Sinner's* reasonable powers tho' woefully *perverted*, are not *Extinguish'd*. His *understanding* makes him yet capable to consider the miserable Case he is reduc'd to, and the propofals that Divine Grace makes for his recovery from it ; and tho' his *Will* is wretchedly enslav'd by sensual Lusts, yet it has not lost that Self-determining Power that is essential to Man as a reasonable and free Agent. For otherwise, it were as vain an attempt for us to address our selves to an *unconverted Sinner* with persuasions and counsels to *return to God*, as to use Arguments with a *Stone* to *move it self*, or to reason with a *dead Corps* to induce it to *walk* and to perform all the functions of a *living One*.

But

But this Expression does import, that such an unconverted Sinner is *devoid of spiritual or Divine Life*, and that he is under a *virtual sentence of Eternal Death*.

1. Such an *Unconverted Sinner* is *devoid of spiritual or Divine Life*.

He is (as the Scripture elsewhere speaks) *alienated from the Life of God*, Eph. 4. 18.

As the *prodigal Son* was *Dead to him*, and in his *Account*, when he was *gone from him*, when all affectionate intercourse between him and his Father was broken off, and he was engag'd in that profuse and licentious way of Living that was more grievous to his Father, than if he had heard of his being *naturally Dead* : So is an *unconverted Sinner dead unto God* ; he is engag'd in a voluntary *Departure and Defection* from him ; he is no way dispos'd to live unto God, in pursuance of the great End of his Creation which was to *glorifie him* as his *Owner and Sovereign Lord*, and enjoy him as his *final Blessedness*. All amicable Communion and Intercourse between God and the Sinner is broken off. He has no dutiful Inclination towards

wards the B. God to know and admire, to adore and love, to obey and serve, to imitate and resemble him, and to seek his satisfying happiness in the fruition of him; but on the contrary his Heart is possess'd with a powerful aversion to such a Divine Life. He has no inward byats in his depraved Nature that shou'd effectually prompt him to propose the *Glory* of God as his highest *Aim*, to make his *Laws* the *Rule* of his Heart and Life, and to be influenc'd by a Superlative *Love* to him, as the Commanding Principle of all his Actions.

And as in a *dead Corps*, no *vital Motions* appear; so in an unregenerate Soul there are no *motions* of *Divine Life*, no prevalent *fear* of God or *Affection* to him; no ardent *Desires* after him, or satisfying *Delight* in him; no *Zeal* for his *Glory*, or *Devotedness* to Interest; no *breathings* after his sanctifying *Grace*; no *realizing Views*, and *joyful Hopes*, and *vigorous pursuits* of *Eternal Glory*.

And as a *dead Corps* is but a *ghastly* and *undesirable Sight*, which we can take no pleasure in looking upon: So is an *unconverted Sinner* a very *unwelcome* and
loath-

loathsome Spectacle in the Eyes of an infinitely Holy God, who cannot behold a Creature so devoyd of all devout Affections towards himself, so perverted from the great End of its Creation, so wofully degenerated from its primitive Beauty and Perfection, without a just Abhorrence and Aversion.

And what has been said of every *unconverted Sinner*, is much more true of every *profligate One*. And such a *one* the *Prodigal* was chiefly design'd to be the *Emblem* of. And of such we may well say as the Apostle does of *her* that *lives in impure pleasure, That they are Dead while they Live*, 1. Tim. 5. 6. Nay such a *profligate Sinner* looks not only like a *Corps* that's Dead, but like *one* that is *putrified* and become *Corrupt* and *Stinking*: So is such a *licentious Sinner* not only devoyd of all principles and motions of Divine Life, but even *over-run* with *filth* and *putrefaction* that renders him a *noysom* as well as *ghastly Spectacle*. I have read of a very beautiful Youth, who being surprized with sudden Death was Buried; but after he had lain a while in the Grave, some of his surviving Relations had the
cu-

curiosity to have his Coffin open'd that they might have his Picture drawn ; but when the Coffin was open'd, they were surprized to find, that not only *Worms* but *Serpents* were crawling upon, and had miserably defac'd all the parts of his Body. And methinks a *licentious Sinner* is much-what such a *hideous Spectacle* as this. Cou'd we see thro' his fair *out-side* and *Coffin* of his *Body* into his *Heart*, O what a *swarm* of *vile* and *hateful Lusts*, of *wicked Thoughts*, and *impure Desires*, and *brutish Passions* shou'd we there discern, that miserably *deface* his precious *Soul*, and render it such a *loathsom* and *frightful sight* to every considerate Beholder, as that I have now mention'd. And (to end the *Parallel*) as a *dead Carcass* is *devoid* of all *Sense* and *Feeling*, never perceiving the *Injuries* that may be done to it ; so is the *Soul* of a *licentious Sinner* *past all spiritual feeling*, insensible of its wretched Condition, never perceiving the *Wounds* given to it by every wilful *Sin*, never affected with any dangers or evils 'tis threatned with.

In

In a word, every *unconverted* especially every *profligate Sinner* is *Dead* to all the valuable purposes of *Life*.

But when such a *Sinner* is said to be *Dead*, it may import further.

2. *That he is under a virtual sentence of Death.*

The *prodigal's Father* look'd upon his *Son* as *Dead*, because he expected to hear no better account of him than that of his *Ruin*, or his coming to some untimely *End*.

But an *unconverted Sinner* may much more be regarded as one *Dead*; for as we commonly say of a *Malefactor condemn'd to Dye*, that he's a *dead Man*; We may as truly say it of an *impenitent Sinner*, he is by the virtual sentence of the *Law of God* *condemn'd to Dye*; *Death* is the just *Wages* of his manifold *Transgressions*, even that *Eternal Death* that is oppos'd to *Eternal Life*, *Rom. 6.*

And as this is the *Case* of every *unconverted Sinner*, so much more of every *profligate One*; for he is *One* that has run deeper than others in arrears to the *Justice of God*, and has made himself far more a *child of Wrath* and *Heir of Hell* than others.

M

And

And sure the Case of such a Sinner is Dreadful, who is thus by his Guilt bound over to Eternal Death. And we shou'd apprehend it to be so, if we understood or consider'd what *eternal Death* includes; for 'tis not an *Extinction of natural Life* (how well comparatively were it for Sinners if it were so:) No, 'tis an *endless separation from God* the true Fountain of Life and Light and Joy, and a sinking into remediless Darkness and Horror, Anguish and Despair. And those are *Dead* indeed who are liable to such a Misery as this.

But farther.

2. A Sinner before his Conversion is represented as *Lost* as well as *Dead*.

And this Expression seems particularly to allude to the *Parable of the Shepherd* and his *Sheep* in the beginning of this Chapter, v. 4, 5, &c. As a *Sheep* when *stray'd* is said to be *Lost*, both because 'tis no longer of any *Use* and *Advantage* to the *Shepherd*, and because 'tis *like to perish* for want of his Care, by becoming the prey of some ravenous Creature: So an *unconverted Sinner* may be said to be *Lost* in both these Senses.

1. *Before*

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1. *Before*

I. *Before his Conversion, he is lost to the service of God his rightful Owner.*

The prodigal's Father reckon'd his Son lost as to all that Obedience and Service he expected from him. See v. 29.

We are all of us by Obligation the *Sheep of his Pasture*, Ps. 100. v. 3. He has an absolute Propriety in us, and right to our utmost Service. Now we are all of us *wandering Sheep*, who have gone *astray, turning every one after his own (wretched) Way*. And therefore while we continue in our state of revolt and Disobedience, we are *lost to all the Service and Use* he expects from us. That blessed *God* that made us, reaps no Tribute of Glory from us, by our belief of & subjection to his revealed Will, & by that spiritual Homage and Worship we shou'd pay to Him. That merciful *Saviour* that has shed his Blood as the price of our Redemption, reaps no honour from us by our thankful Acceptance of his offer'd Grace and Salvation; and by our unfeigned Dedication of that Life to him which he has purchas'd at the Expence of his own: So that as to all those excellent *Ends and Purposes* for which we were *made and redeem'd*, we are entirely *Lost*. M 2 And

And much more may this be said of a *profligate Sinner* who lives to quite *contrary Purposes and Ends*, to the dishonour of God, and to the reproach of our Blessed Saviour. Such a one is at present entirely *lost* to his *Service*, being openly engag'd in the *contrary service* of *Satan and Sin*: But,

2. A *Sinner before Conversion* is *Lost*, as that imports his *danger of Perishing for ever*.

The *prodigal's Father* reckon'd his *Son* lost when he was from under his *Eye and Care*, and left to himself, and to his *giddy Counsels and Conduct*; and therefore expected to hear no other than a *sorrowful account* of his being *ruin'd and undone*.

And much more may we reckon an *unconverted Sinner* lost, when by a *voluntary Departure* from God, he casts himself out of his *protection and indulgent Care*. He is then enter'd on those *paths of Sin*, that lead to *Hell and Destruction*. He's expos'd as a *Prey* to that *roaring Lyon* that goes about seeking whom he may *Devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. He's at present *lost* as to all *hopes* of *Heaven and Salvation*, and in *danger of remediless Perdition*. And

Serm. VI. *Prodigal Son.* 181

And what is said of every *unconverted Sinner*, is much more applicable to every *profligate One*. Such a one is wandred far from the *paths of Life*, and has made a dreadful progress in the road of *Death and Hell*. He is sunk into an almost irrecoverable *Distance* from God ; and Satan seems to hold him fast in his Paws as his prey, and as one of those that are taken *Captive by him at his Pleasure*, 2 Tim. 2 ult. Such a one seems to stand on the very *brink* of *Eternal Destruction*, and looks in the eye and judgment of all serious *Beholders*, like one that is *lost and undone for ever*.

This is the deplorable Case of a *Sinner before his Conversion* : But,

Secondly, *Upon his Conversion* it may be truly said of him ; he that was *Dead*, is *made alive*, and he that was *Lost* is *found*.

1. He that was *Dead* is now *made alive*.

i. e. He is restor'd to spiritual and Divine Life, and thereby to the hope of Life Eternal.

1. He is restor'd to spiritual and Divine Life.

182 *On the Parable of the*

The *Prodigal* reckon'd his Son *alive* again, when he hop'd he wou'd now live to be a *comfort* and *honour* to his *Father*.

So is the *dead Sinner* then *alive to God*, when those holy *Principles* and *Inclinations* are implanted in his Soul, that will enable and dispose him to *live to God*. He is then *alive to God*, when his *understanding* is enlighten'd and replenish'd with *Divine Knowledge & Faith*. When his *Will* is conform'd to the holy Nature and Will of God; when his *Affections* are elevated to, and fix'd on God and on *Divine and Heavenly Objects*. He is then *alive to God*, when the *bent* of his Soul is turn'd towards him; so that God's *Glory* is the great *End* he proposes and pursues; his *Laws* are the *Rule* he observes and follows; his *Love* is the predominant principle he is *acted* by. He is now *alive to God*, since to glorify and please him, to adore and love him, to obey and serve him, and to seek his satisfying Blessedness, in him is the main *scope* and principal *study* and *business* of his Life: In a word, he now lives *not to himself, but to God*; he is quickned from his *Death in Sin*, and recover'd to

a truly *Holy* and *Heavenly Life*. So that he now liveth to all the valuable Ends and Purposes for which such a reasonable Creature was made, even a Life truly devoted to the honour of God, and acceptable in his Sight.

Nay,

2. *He is thereby restor'd to the hope of Eternal Life.*

For those principles of *Divine Life* implanted in his Soul are the seed of a *blessed immortality*; and are accordingly represented by our Saviour as a *Well of Water springing up to everlasting Life*, John 4. 14. A true Convert has that spiritual *Light* set up in his mind, which is as the *dawning of Eternal Day*. He has that *Grace* sown in his Heart that is the *bud of Eternal Glory*; he has that *inward Peace* there, that is the *first-fruits of everlasting Joys*; so that he is one recover'd from the borders of remediless Despair and Death, to the reviving hope of a glorious and endless Life. So truly may it be said of him, *That he that was once Dead, is now made Alive.*

M 4

But,

But,

2. Upon the Conversion of a Sinner, be that was lost is now found.

The prodigal's Father reckon'd his returning Son now found, both as to his Service, and his own Advantage:

So is a true Convert found again.

1. In respect of God to whose service he Returns,

He is as a straying Sheep brought home to the fold of Christ. He's now recover'd from the wretched unjust vassalage of Satan and Sin, to devote himself to the service of his rightful Lord, his gracious Father, and merciful Redeemer. He's one now dispos'd to glorify God with that body and soul which are His, but were too long alienated from his Use to whom they did of right belong. God will now have the principal use of his Reason and Judgment, his Will and Affections, his Strength and Vigour, his Time and all his Talents: All these will be devoted to the Glory and Interest, and employ'd in the service of that blessed God, who justly claims an absolute Propriety in him.

2. A

Serm. VI *Prodigal Son.* 185

2. A true Convert is also found again in respect of his own true Advantage.

He's now delivered as a prey out of the Jaws of the devouring Lyon; he's rescu'd from the pernicious Dominion of the malicious destroyer of Souls, and pluck'd as a Brand out of the Fire; he's now return'd to Jesus Christ the compassionate Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, 1 Pet. 2. He is brought under the conduct of his Spirit and Grace, and under the care of his indulgent Providence, and is now likely to be safe for ever in his Heavenly Field. He is become one of those Sheep of whom our Lord tells us, *That he knows 'em, and will give 'em Eternal Life, and none shall pluck 'em out of his Hands,* John 10. 27, 28. He is one delivered from the powers of Darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of the dear Son of God; in whose final Salvation Divine Grace shall be for ever Magnify'd. So happily is he found in respect of his own everlasting Interest.

And all this is included in this Conversion of a Sinner to God, which is here represented as the ground of so great Joy.

I come therefore,

II. To shew, That the *Conversion* of a *Sinner* is a *justifiable Ground* of the *highest Joy*, viz. Because that thereby, *One that was dead is made alive, and one that was lost is found.*

And that this is a solid *Ground* of great *Joy*, will appear if we consider, either the *Glory* that thereby redounds to the *blessed God*, or the *Benefit* and *Happiness* that occurs to the *converted Sinner himself.*

1. The *Conversion* of a *Sinner* will appear to be a solid *Ground* of great *Joy*, if we consider the *Glory* that thereby redounds to the *Blessed God.*

And indeed the advancement of the glory of God is the most justifiable ground of solid *Joy*, and will be the most powerful spring of it to all that are acted with *Divine Zeal.* And sure nothing is more eminently conducive thereto then, a *Sinner's Conversion*: For thereby one of his revolted *Creatures* is brought back to him, and his *Interest* enlarg'd on the ruins of *Satan's* usurped *Empire.* There is one *Subject* more added to his *Kingdom*, and one *Child* to his *Family*; there's one
more

more whose *Pardon* and *Salvation* shall render him an everlasting *Monument* and *Instance* of the riches of *Divine Grace*. There's *one more* in whose *Eternal Redemption* the vertue and efficacy of our Saviour's attoning Sacrifice and powerful Mediation shall be Display'd. There's *one more* in whose recovery to *Divine Life* the victorious influence of his *Spirit* and *Grace* shall Triumph for ever. There's *one Sheep* more added to the fold of Christ, *one follower* to his blessed *Retinue*, *one Member* to his *mystical Body*, whose future Dignity and Blessedness shall be an accession to the Glory of his *exalted Head* and *Lord*, when he comes to be glorified in his *Saints*, and admir'd in them that believe on him, 2 Thes. 1. 10. There's *one Temple* more for the *Holy Spirit* to dwell in; *one Vessel of Mercy* more to be prepar'd by his sanctifying Grace for the Heavenly Glory. And what will justify our highest Joy if this will not?

Nay, the more *profligate* a *Sinner* has been, his *Conversion* serves the more to illustrate the Glory of *Divine Grace*. Towards such a *one* the infinite *Mercy* of God super-abounds in the pardon of their

their multiply'd and aggravated Offences. Nay the *Efficacy* of Divine Grace does more signally appear, when it recovers such dead Sinners to Spiritual Life; when it *dispossesses* Satan where he seem'd so strongly garrison'd; when it *transforms* a licentious Prodigal into a dutiful Child, and makes obstinate Rebels become a willing and Obedient People; when it turns an Incarnate Devil into an Incarnate Angel; when it polishes the most rugged Tempers, and sets a noble and godlike Stamp on thole Souls in whom all the Relicks of the Divine Image seem'd to be *defac'd*: And sure where the blessed God is so highly glorify'd, we shou'd greatly rejoice, and shall do so if his Interest be (as it truly shou'd) infinitely dearer to us than any we can call our own.

Nay,

2. The *Conversion* of a Sinner will appear to be a solid ground of the highest Joy, if we consider the *Benefit* and *Happiness* that thereby redoun's to himself.

The *Conversion* of a Sinner is an Excellent and blessed Work, which truly
Di-

Divine Charity shou'd dispose us to welcome the tidings of with the greatest satisfaction.

If the temporal Good of others shou'd be rejoyc'd in, much more their spiritual and Eternal Welfare. If it be matter of Joy when a *diseased Patient* is recover'd, when a miserable *Captive* is set at Liberty, when a *lost Sheep* is found; how much more, when a *Sinner* that is dead and putrifying in the Grave of Sin, is recover'd to *Divine Life*; when a *Vassal* of *Satan* is redeem'd from his wretched *Bondage*; when a *Sheep* of *Christ* is rescu'd from the paws of the great *Abaddon*; when an *Apostate Sinner* is happily brought back to his Heavenly Father; and of a *Child of Wrath*, and *Heir of Hell*, becomes an *adopted Child* of *God*, and *Heir of Heaven*.

And this is more especially applicable to the *Conversion* of a *profligate Sinner*. Because of such a one there seem'd to be little hope left: And therefore the *Conversion* of such being the more surprising and unexpected, is fitly represented (in all these three Parables in this Chapter) as occasioning a more sensible transport of Joy. Thus the *Shepherd* was more sensibly

sibly *affected* and *ravish'd* with the recovery of that *one Sheep* which he had given over for *lost*, than with the *safety* of the *ninety Nine* that had never been expos'd to so eminent *Danger*.

'Tis less wonder that Divine Grace *renews* those whom it had long *restrain'd*; that it prevails on those whom pious Education had in some sort *prepar'd* to receive it's Impressions and Stamp. But 'tis more *amazing*, and occasions a greater *surprize* of Joy, when it conquers the strongest opposition of corrupt Nature; when it causes the *living Fruits* of righteousness to spring up in the most *barren Soyl*; when it makes the Heavenly *Seed* to *pierce* into those *Hearts* that seem'd as hard and impenetrable as the *Rocks* themselves. This may well occasion a more sensible *rapture* of *Admiration* and *Delight*, as those eminent Mercies usually do, that come most *unexpected*, and after we had almost *Despair'd* of 'em. As doubtless the *Prodigal's* return ravish'd his Father the more, because in his Thoughts he had given him over for *Dead* and *Lost*.

It now remains, that we make a more particular Application of this Subject.

And

And accordingly,

I. I wou'd hence Address my self to
all unconverted Sinners.

And to them I wou'd suggest the two
following *Uses* of what has been said.

1. Hence *reflect upon the Misery of
your present State.*

You are here represented in my Text
as *Dead and Lost.*

You are at present *Dead* to that spi-
ritual and Divine Life which your Na-
tures are capable of, and which is the
beginning and seed of Life Eternal.
There's no saving *Knowledge* or *Belief*
of Divine Truths in your Minds; no
gracious *Inclinations* towards God in your
Hearts; no Disposition to your present
Duty or future Blessedness. In respect
of the Affairs and Interests of this Life
you *live and act*; but in reference to
those of your Souls and Eternity, there
is no discernable motion or sign of Life.
And you are going on in *spiritual Death*
towards *death Eternal*, being bound o-
ver thereto, by the righteous *sentence* of
the Law of God, and every moment in
danger of the *Execution* of it.

You

193 *On the Parable of the*

You are also represented as *lost*.

You are *useless* at present to all those excellent Purposes for which God made you reasonable Creatures; and the Design of redeeming Grace upon you has been hitherto frustrated: You are estranged from God, captivated by Satan and sin, and in danger of *perishing for ever*.

And dare you stupidly persist in so *woful* and so *hazardous* a Case as this? Is this a state to rest satisfy'd and contented in? Will you not open your Eyes to see that brink of Misery and Perdition that you stand upon? Will you not at last come to yourself, and entertain serious Thoughts and Resolutions of returning to God? But that leads me to add.

1. *O be persuaded then to return to God*, that it may be said of you, That tho' you were once *dead* you are now *alive*, tho' you were once *lost* you are now *found*.

Continue no longer *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. Resolve henceforth, that you *will live to God*, in conformity to his *Laws* as your great Rule, in pursuit of his *Glory* as your *ultimate End*.

Implore

Implore his quickning Grace that alone can form the principles of Divine Life in your Hearts. You have too long gone astray, and wander'd too far in the paths of Death and Hell : *O consider your Ways, and turn your Feet to God's Testimonies ; make haste and delay not to keep his Commandments.* Return to Christ as the compassionate *Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.* Come back to his *Fold*, and resign your selves to the Dominion and Conduct of his Spirit and Grace.

And that I may persuade you hereto, give me leave to urge upon you this Argument suggested in the Text.

O consider, What a solid Ground your Conversion will be of the highest Joy.

The great God himself will rejoyce therein.

Even tho' you may have been perverse and hainous Sinners, yet if you will now return, *There will be Joy in Heaven upon your Repentance,* Luk. 15.

7. A compassionate God does here represent his bowels of pitty towards you under the *Emblem of an indulgent*

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Fa.

Father, who receiv'd even a returning Prodigal with a *transport of Affection* and Joy. With such *complacential Favour* and *Delight* will a gracious God embrace a *penitent Sinner*, that with ingenuous shame and remorse casts himself at his Feet with unfeigned resolutions of returning to his Duty. How will he that *has no pleasure in the Death of Sinners*, but in their Repentance and Salvation, take pleasure in such an *occasion* to glorify his Mercy in the forgiveness and Acceptance of a sincere Penitent that flees into his compassionate Arms! Nay, How will a merciful Redeemer rejoyce in the Salvation of a *lost and perishing Sinner* that comes to him for refuge and Relief! How will the Holy Spirit rejoyce to make that Soul his living Temple, that has been formerly the Receptacle and Hold of *unclean Spirits*, and the Nest of *impure Lusts*, but is now cleans'd and resign'd to the Conduct of his sanctifying Grace! In a Word, That blessed God, the exercise of whose Mercy is his highest Delight, will be highly pleas'd in extending it to an Object that

is

is now made capable thereof by a sincere *Conversion* to him.

Again, *Angels will rejoyce in your Conversion.*

They are *ministering Spirits that minister to them that shall be Heirs of Salvation*, and therefore behold the success of the Grace of God in the *Conversion of Sinners* with the highest Complacency. *There is Joy* (saith our Saviour) *in the presence of the Angels of God over one Sinner that Repenteth,* Luk. 15. 10. 'Tis welcome News to them, when any are *delivered from the powers of Darkness*, and *translated into the Kingdom of Christ*; when any by *converting Grace* are added to the *Family of God*, and shall be their *Eternal Associates* in the *Heavenly Kingdom*. Both that ardent *Zeal* they have for the *Glory of their Creator and Lord*, and that warm *Affection* they have to their *fellow-Creatures*, disposes 'em to receive the tidings of a *Sinner's Repentance* with a *transport of Joy*.

The saints of God that hear of thy Conversion will rejoyce in it.

For what can be more grateful News to them, than to hear of *one Fellow-Citizen* more added to their holy Community; *one Member* more to their society on Earth, who shall with them make up the *general Assembly and Church of the first-born Above*. Their Love to their blessed Lord must needs prompt them to rejoyce when his *Kingdom and Family* is increas'd.

And the *Ministers of Christ* will greatly share in this Joy.

'Tis the greatest Discouragement imaginable to them, when they see their Labours unsuccessfull, and their Hopes of your Conversion frustrated. 'Tis a sad Damp to their Spirits when their calls to Repentance are slighted; and their most earnest Persuasions thereto make no more Impression on the Hearts of stupid Sinners, then if they spake to *inanimate* stocks, or preach't over the Graves of the Dead. But on the contrary, when their Ministrations are effectual; when *God's Israel* is gathered, and many Souls are brought Home to him; When the *Dead* hear the Voice of *Christ* in his word, and
are

Serm. VI. *Prodigal Son.* 197

are rais'd thereby to *Spiritual Life*; When *lost Souls* are recover'd, and brought back from their miserable wanderings to the *Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*: How does this revive their Hearts, and enlarge their affections, and put new Life and Vigour into all their Attempts for the Salvation of Souls!

And now will you choose rather, by your continued Impenitency to gratify *Satan* your greatest Enemy, or to please your wretched *Companions in sin*, then by your sincere Repentance to minister such occasion of Joy both in *Heaven* and *Earth*? Shou'd you not most readily do that, which will be so pleasing to the great God, so grateful to his holy *Angels*, so joyous to all his *Faithful Servants*, and particularly to those that watch over your *Souls*, all of whom wou'd entertain the News of your sincere *Conversion* with the highest Satisfaction.

Nay, let me tell you, you'll have the greatest occasion to *Rejoyce* therein your *Selves*, and will review this change in your Nature and State, with the highest Satisfaction.

But that leads me.

II. To address my self to those that are converted to God, and to them I would suggest these two things.

I. Rejoyce in your own Conversion to God.

Often excite your thankful Joy in this happy change by such Reflections as these.

“ Once I was as others *dead in Tref-*
 “ *passes and Sins*, but I am now *quick-*
 “ *ned* by the Grace of God. Once I
 “ was under the power of *Blindness*
 “ and *Unbelief*, but now my *Eyes* are
 “ *Opened* to see the things that belong
 “ to my everlasting Peace. Once I
 “ *liv'd to my self*, or rather to this for-
 “ *did Flesh*, but now I *live to God*,
 “ making his Glory my Aim and his
 “ Laws my Rule. *Heaven* is now my
 “ *End*, and *Holiness* my way and course.
 “ Now *Faith*, and *Hope*, and *Love*, and
 “ all the Graces of the Spirit of God
 “ are implanted in my Heart, which
 “ before was as a barren soil, where only
 “ *Ignorance*, and *Ungodliness*, and
 “ worldly Lusts naturally sprung up.
 “ Once

Serm. VI. *Prodigal Son.* 199

“ One, I was *gone astray* from God, and
“ *wandering* in the paths of Sin, and
“ *Death*, ready to *perish for ever*; but
“ now I am *return'd* to my *compassio-*
“ *nate Father*, and his *Grace* has led my
“ *Feet* into the paths of *Peace* and
“ *Life*. O blessed be his *Name* that
“ has *glorify'd* his *Grace* on a *Sinner*
“ that *deserv'd* so much to be an *Object*
“ of his *Justice* ! O blessed *Day* of his
“ *mighty Power*, from which I may
“ *date my New-birth*, and that *spiritu-*
“ *al Life* which shall be the seed of *Life*
“ *Eternal* ! Ohappy Time, when *Di-*
“ *vine Grace* *found me* and *brought me*
“ *back* to my *gracious Father*, and *mer-*
“ *ciful Redeemer* ! Sure (my Brethren)
we do not believe such a *change* to be
made in our *Nature* and *state*, or we do
not apprehend how *great* and *desirable*
the *Change* is, if we do not *rejoyce* in
it, if the *satisfying Persuasion* of it do
not affect and ravish our *Hearts*, if we
do not think ourselves *unspeakably hap-*
py in the *favour and Family*, in the *Em-*
braces and *Affection* of our *Heavenly*
Father.

200 *On the Parable of the*

2. *Let us rejoyce in the Conversion of others, and evidence we do so by our serious endeavours to promote it.*

Let us rejoyce in the Conversion of others. Let us long to hear those welcome tidings of more *dead souls quickened* by regenerating Grace, and more *straying Sheep reduc'd* to the fold of Christ, and more *disobedient Sinners turn'd to the Wisdom of the Just.* Let us sympathize with the Interests of our Lord's Kingdom, and be *rais'd or dejected* accordingly as we see the great Work of *Conversion* to prosper or decline. Let us as the dutiful Children of our Heavenly Father *rejoice* when his Family is *increas'd*, and when in his visible Church *this or that Man is Born to him.* Let an ardent Zeal for the Salvation of others be the reigning Affection of our Hearts. Let us envy no Man the Grace of God. Let us not be like the *elder Brother* in my Text, that was griev'd at the *welcome Reception* of the *returning Prodigal.* Or like those *unbelieving and uncharitable Jews* (whom our Lord here censures) that *envy'd the Conversion of the Gentiles to God,*

Serm. VI. *Prodigal Son.* 201

God, and their admission into his Church and Family. We indeed have no Temptation to do so, who our selves are the *Race of the Gentiles*. But (my Brethern) Let us *rejoyce* in the *Conversion of Sinners*, *whoever* be the *Instrument* thereof. Let us rejoyce when we hear of any being real *Converts to God and Christ*, tho' they be not *Profelytes* to this or that *divided Party*. Nay let us reckon all such *sincere Converts* as our *Brethren and Members* of the *same Community*. If they be *added to the Church of Christ* we should Account 'em as *added to us*. For all *true Christians* (whatever smaller differences there may be in their *Opinions* or *Practices* in lesser things, or whatever *Distinguishing Names* they go under) are *Members* of the *same Mystical Body*, they are *Denizens* of the *same City*, and every true *Convert* to God and Holiness is an *accession* to the Number of 'em.

And let it appear that we rejoyce in the *Conversion* of others by our *compassionate Endeavours* to promote it.

We

We have manifold opportunities to do so by our persuasions and Counsels, especially those of us that have others actually under our Authority and Inspection. O let us long to be the happy Instrument of *turning some Sinner from the Error of his way, and thereby saving a Soul from Death, and covering a Multitude of Sins*, James 5. 19, 20 ! Of bringing back some Prodigals to their Heavenly Father ! Let us with an holy tenderness and pity, warn such of their Dangers, and with a compassionate Violence, *pluck 'em us brands out of the Fire*. Even tho' they turn a deaf Ear to our present Counsels, let us not be discourag'd and cease our attempts. The Grace of God can reclaim a *Prodigal* after he has long run into all Excesses of Riot.

There may be (some *mollia tempora fandi*) some *happy seasons* in which our serious Persuasions may make deeper Impressions. Let us not then give 'em over, but imitate that merciful God who *waits long to be Gracious*, and by the riches of his forbearance, still leads us

Serm VI *Prodigal Son.* 203

to Repentance. And if we shou'd at last prevail for the *Conversion* of any, we shou'd have great occasion to rejoyce in our Success. And that not only on the account of the Blessed God, whose Interest and Kingdom is thereby advanc'd, not only on the account of those *Sinners* themselves, whom we are instrumental to quicken when *Dead*, and to recover when *lost*; but also on our own account, when we consider the gracious promise, *That they that will be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever,* Prov. 12. 3.

And thus I have finish'd what I had to offer to your Consideration on the *Parable* of the *Prodigal*. And O that some poor *Prodigals* may from these *Discourses* date their *Conversion* to their *Heavenly Father*! May some of them come to themselves, and then they will entertain serious Resolutions of returning to him. And if any of you do, I assure you in the Name of God you may expect a most welcome Reception; and that there

204 On the Parable of &c.

there will be great Joy in the Family of God above as well as that below, when a Dead Sinner is made Alive, and one that was Lost is happily found.

FINIS.
3 NO 63

F A I T H,

The Principle of a
Christian's Life.

A
SERMON

On GAL. Chap. II.

Last Clause of the 20th Verse.

By J. B.

D U B L I N:

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THE
BRITISH MUSEUM
CHRISTMAS'S LIFE

SEVERAL
OF THE
OLD CATHOLIC

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY
THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY
THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

GAL. Chap. II.

The last Clause of the 20. v.

I am Crucify'd with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the Life which I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. —

I Need not here enlarge on the high Encomium which the Holy Scriptures every where give of *Divine Faith*. You know how clearly the inspired Writer to the *Hebrews* ascribes all the memorable instances of *Piety* and *Holiness* recorded concerning the Saints of the *Old Testament* to this excellent Principle; and this pursuant to that general Assertion he had laid down, *That the Just shall live by Faith*. See *Heb. 10. 38, v.* Compar'd with the 11th Chapter throughout.

Nor

Nor shall I here consider *Divine Faith* in it's utmost *Latitude*, as a *practical Assent* to the whole of *Divine Revelation*, but with a particular regard to our *blest Saviour* as the *special Object* of it. We talk much of *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, and justly esteem it as the great *Work of God* which the Gospel enjoins as necessary to our partaking of that glorious *Salvation* it reveals. But I fear 'tis few in Comparison that are truly acquainted with the genuine *Exercise* of this *Divine Principle*, and that can say with the Apostle in my Text, *The Life that I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God*. Nay some seem very incautiously to assert, that the Duty of *Faith in the Son of God*, is never in Scripture inculcated upon those that have already embrac'd Christianity. Such seem to have forgot, that Christ must *dwell in our Hearts by Faith*, and that we must live under the continual *conduct and influence* of this *radical Grace*. And to represent to you the necessity of doing so will be the chief purport of what I shall from these Words offer to your Consideration.

The

The Apostle Paul had told us at v. 19. *That he thro' the Law was Dead to the Law, that he might live to God, i. e.* He was convinced by the precepts and threats of the Law of the impossibility of being justify'd upon a plea of sinless Obedience to it, that he might now live to God, whose Grace had open'd a new way of Justification and Life. And he adds at v. 20. *I am Crucify'd with Christ. i. e.* I have felt the power of his Cross in crucifying my Flesh with the sinful Affections and Lusts thereof, and in Crucifying the World to me, and me to the World. Nevertheless (saith he) *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. q. d.* Tho' dead with Christ to the Flesh and the World, and to the Law itself (as to any hope of Justification by it) yet *I live a new Life; but 'tis a Life* so entirely derived from Christ, and so absolutely devoted to him, that it cannot be so properly said, that *I live*, as that *Christ lives in me.* His quickning Spirit being the Principle, his Laws the Rule, his Life the Exemplar, and his Glory the great End and scope of my Life.

And then he adds in the Words of my Text, *The Life that I now live in*
O
the

200 *Faith the principle of a*
the flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son
of God.

The Words then offer this important
Subject to our present Consideration,
viz.

That Faith in the Son of God is the
great Principle that has a powerful exten-
sive influence upon the whole of a true
Christian's present Life.

The Apostle could not have more sig-
nificantly asserted the general *Efficacy* and
Energy of Divine Faith, than by thus
ascribing the whole of his Life to it.

He here speaks of that new and Di-
vine Life he liv'd as now implanted into
Christ, and made a *living Member* of
his *mystical Body*; of this excellent Life,
Faith in the Son of God was the active
Principle, the exercise whereof ran thro'
every part of it.

In speaking hereto, I shall
I. Consider this principle of Divine
Faith, as it respects the Son of God as
the special Object of it.

II. I shall shew, what a powerful ex-
tensive influence this Divine Faith should
have upon the whole of a true Christian's
Life.

And

And the Subject being entirely *practical*. I shall make no distinction between the *doctrinal* and *applicatory* part of the *Discourse*.

I. I shall briefly consider this *principle* of *Divine Faith*, as it respects the *Son of God* as the *special Object* of it.

Now *faith in the Son of God* being a *Grace* seated not only in the *Understanding*, but the *Will*, includes in it such distinct *Acts* as these: As,

1. A prevailing *assent* of our *Mind* and *Judgement*, not only to the *Truth* of the *Gospel* in general, but more particularly to what it reveals concerning the *Person*, the *mediatory Undertaking* and *Offices* of the incarnate *Son of God*.

This *faith* implies our *unfeigned persuasion* of the *certainty* of what the *Scriptures* declare concerning his *Incarnation*, his *Life*, his *expiatory Sufferings* and *Death*, his *glorious Resurrection* and *Ascension*, his *prevalent Intercession*, and the *Administration* of his *mediatorial Kingdom*, and his *final Appearance* and *Coming*. Again.

2. Our *Faith* includes in it a *sincere Apprehension* of his blessed *Design*; a *cordial Resolution* to *comply with it*, and

212 *Faith, the principle of a*
consequently an unfeigned *Acceptance* of
him as our offer'd *Saviour*, and consent
to become his *Disciples*, his *Subjects*,
his *redeem'd People*, and *purchased Possession*. By this *Faith* we embrace his
great and precious Promises, and agree
to his gracious proposed *Terms*. We
come to him, to be *justify'd by his Blood*,
and *renew'd by his Holy Spirit*, and free-
ly take his (just and gracious) *Yoke upon*
us.

Again,

3. Our *Faith* further includes our
ingenuous *Trust* and *Affiance* in him as
every way *able and willing* to accomplish
all that he has *undertaken* in order to
our *Recovery and Salvation*, Being per-
suaded of his *All-sufficiency* and *Fideli-*
ty, we are thereby encourag'd to *com-*
mit our Souls (by way of *Depositum* and
Trust) into his safe and gracious *Hands*,
as *persuaded that he will keep what we*
have so committed to him to the great Day.
By *Faith* we *flee* to him as our *Refuge*,
and lay the *stresses* of our *eternal Concern-*
ments on his powerful and successful *Me-*
diation.

All these several *Acts* must concur to
constitute a *practical Faith* on the *Son of*
God,

God, and they have a manifest and necessary Dependance on one another. The unfeigned *assent* of our Minds to what the Scriptures declare concerning the *incarnate Son of God*, drawing along with it our *consent* to receive him as our offer'd Redeemer, and our *fiducial Trust* and *Dependance* on him for whatever he has engag'd to do in order to the restoring us to the *Image* and *favour* of God, and to a state of consummate *Happiness* in the Injoyment of him.

I know indeed a late learned *Commentator* dos with some confidence Assert, that the Scriptural Notion of Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ imports no more,
 " Then a full *Assent* to and firm Per-
 " *suaſion* of Mind concerning the Truth
 " of what is testify'd, reveal'd or repor-
 " ted by God himself, or by Persons com-
 " missioned by him to reveal his Will, con-
 " cerning Jesus Christ. Or briefly thus,
 " 'Tis a firm *Persuaſion*, that he who
 " suffer'd at Jerusalem was the true Mes-
 " ſiah, the Saviour of the World, the
 " Prophet who was to come, that Per-
 " son who was constituted Lord of all
 " Things; Or which amounts to the
 " same thing, That he was Christ the

214 Faith, the Principle of a

son of God. See Dr. Whitby's Preface to the Epistle to the Galatians.

That such an Assent to what the Gospel declares concerning our blessed Saviour, is the first and a very eminent Act of Faith in our Lord Jesus, I freely own. And that it was the principal scope of the Apostle's Writings, to convince and persuade both Gentiles and Jews concerning those important Truths, will be as readily granted. And this is all that that learned Expositor has prov'd. But I can by no means allow, that this is all that the Apostles designed to urge Men to, when they persuaded 'em to believe on the Son of God. Nay I take it to be a dangerous mistake to assert, that the notion of Faith in him, includes no more than a firm persuasion concerning those important Truths. For such a Persuasion of the Mind, how firm soever would no way answer the Design of the Gospel, if it were not accompany'd with the consent of our Wills, to receive the Son of God in all those Offices he is vested with for accomplishing the great Work of our Salvation. And thus to receive the Son of God is the same thing in the Language of the Gospel with believing on him, John 1. 12. Now we must

not only receive him as a *Prophet* by our assent to his *Heavenly Doctrine* (which is all that this *Writer* will allow to be meant by *Faith in him*). But we must receive him as our *rightful Lord Redeemer*, by an unfeigned *Subjection* to his *Authority*; and we must receive him as our *High Priest and Mediator*, by trusting to the efficacy of his *Sacrifice*, and the prevalency of his *Intercession* for our pardon and acceptance, and final *Salvation*. We must not only assent to the *Truth* of his *Promises*, but embrace them by a consent to the *Terms* on which his promised *Blessings* are offer'd. Our *Faith in him* is also in *Scripture* described by coming to him, *John 6. 35*: viz. By coming to him, not merely as *Disciples* to our *Teacher*, but as *diseased Souls* to the great *Physician* of *Souls*, as *guilty Clients* to a powerful *Advocate*; as *obedient Subjects* to our *rightful Lord* whose *Yoke* we are willing to take upon us; and as *wearry and heavy laden Souls* to him that can and will give us rest. See *Mat. xi. 28, 29*.

If it be said, that these other *Acts* do necessarily follow where there is such a *firm assent* of the *Mind*, to what the

216 *Faith, the principle of a*

Gospel declares concerning our Blessed Saviour; I answer, tho' this were true, yet if such an *Affent* alone wou'd never be accepted as *true* and *saving* Faith, without such a *Consent* and *Affiance* (as 'tis manifest it wou'd not) then 'tis dangerous to leave these other *Acts* out of the description of *Faith*: For we may conceive such a firm *Affent* without 'em. A Man may believe such a *Physitian* both *able* and *willing* to heal his Distemper, and yet never come to him, because he is unwilling to use his *Prescriptions*. A Man may be suppos'd to be firmly persuaded, that *Jesus is the Son of God*, and the *Author of Eternal Life* (1 John v. 11, 12.) And yet with the *young Man* in the Gospel be unwilling to *consent* to the *Self-denying Terms* on which *Eternal Life* is propos'd. He therefore that places the whole Notion of *Faith* in such an *assent* of the Mind, gives at best but a *lame* and *defective* Account of it. For 'tis this *consent* of the *Will* to accept that offer'd Saviour on his own propos'd Terms, that chiefly distinguishes a *dead* from a *living* Faith, and therefore shou'd by no means be left out in the *Description* of it. Nor have we
any

any reason to leave out that other *Act* of *Affiance*. For the Original Word *πίστις* chiefly signifies this *Act* of *Trust*, tho' it also include and pre-suppose the two former *Acts* of *Assent* to what the Gospel declares concerning our Saviour's *Offices*, and *Consent* to receive him as therein offer'd to us on his own gracious *Conditions*. I am sure the Apostle describes his *faith* under that Notion of *committing his Soul* (as a *Depositum* and *Trust*) into the Hands of that *powerful* and *faithful* Redeemer, 2 Tim. 1. 12. And to encourage such a *Trust*, our Blessed Saviour represents himself as both *able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him*, and as resolv'd to *cast out none that come to him*, Heb. 7. 25. John 6. 37. And therefore to represent these *real acts of Faith* as no way belonging to the *scriptural Notion* of it, is a matter of dangerous consequence in *practical Religion*. Men should be wary of advancing such *Criticisms* as strip that *Faith* which the Gospel lays so great a *stress* upon of what is *Essential* to it, and can alone denominate it *sincere* and *saving*. 'Tis much safer to adhere to such a full and comprehensive *Description* of it as has been already given. Ha-

Having given this brief Account of *Faith in the Son of God*, I come,

II. To consider, What a powerful and extensive influence this *Faith in the Son of God* will have upon the whole of a true Christian's Life.

Now that we may take a more distinct and accurate view of the Life of a true Christian while he is yet in the Flesh; let us consider it as reducible to these Heads.

First, We may consider it as a continual contest against Sin, and conflict with Temptations to it.

Secondly, As a continued intercourse and communion with God in the immediate Duties of his Worship.

Thirdly, As an holy and useful converse with Men.

Fourthly, As a continued Prosecution of the Heavenly Glory.

Now with respect to every one of these, I shall shew you, of how admirable use and influence our faith in the Son of God is, and how we are accordingly call'd to the Exercise of it.

First, Let us consider the present Life of a Christian as a continual Warfare and contest against Sin, and conflict with Temptations to it.

I. Let

I. Let us consider it as a continual Warfare and contest against Sin.

And here we must exercise our faith in the son of God, in order to our success in that spiritual Warfare.

1. Partly by frequent contemplation of his dying for Sin, as the great Exemplar of our dying to it.

We must herein be spiritually conformed to our dying Saviour. We are therefore implanted by Baptism into the likeness of his Death, that we might in resemblance of him dye to Sin; that our old Man might be Crucify'd, and the body of Sin destroy'd. We shou'd therefore thus reason with this Blessed Apostle elsewhere, *How shall we that are dead to Sin, live any longer therein?* See Rom. 6. 2, 3, &c. And we shou'd be the more sensible of the Necessity of such a spiritual likeness to our dying Saviour, when we consider 'tis the most certain evidence of our relation to him, and our real Interest in the expiatory virtue of his Death and Sacrifice. For none are Christ's, but such as have crucify'd the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts thereof, Gal. 5. 24. We shou'd therefore by Faith look often upon a cruci-
fy'd

fy'd Jesus as the excellent Pattern we shou'd be conformed to, by being *dead* to the *Flesh* and to the *World*, as well as to all hope of justification by the *Mo- saick Law*. And this Consideration will have a powerful influence in order to the *mortifying* the remains of *indwelling Sin*.

2. Again, We must by *Faith* consider our *Obligation* in point of *gratitude* to our Blessed Lord, *to dye to Sin*.

It was one great End that he proposed in his *dying for Sin*, that we might *Dye to it*. He therefore bare our *Sins* in his own *Body on the Tree*, that we being *dead to Sin*, might live unto *Righteousness*, 1 Pet. 2. 24. Our *Faith* shou'd therefore teach us to reason thus: Shall I that expect so inestimable Advantages by my *Saviour's Death*, wilfully counteract one of the great *Ends* that he died for? Shall I suffer those *Sins* to reign in my mortal *Body*, which he design'd to *Destroy*, when he bare the punishment of 'em in his own (Sacred) *Body*? Shall those *hateful Lusts* be harbour'd in my *Heart*, that were the *Murderers of the Lord of Life*? Shall not my grateful Affection to him, prompt me to execute

cure the most *inexorable Revenge* upon those Sins that stabb'd him to the Heart, and had the deepest hand in the *shedding of his precious Blood*? Shall I not bring 'em to his *Cross*, and *Nail* 'em there, that they may there *Expire* and *Dye*? Shall I not by so reasonable a compliance with the great *Design* of my dying Redeemer express a just sense of my unconceivable *Obligations* to him that thus *loved me*, and *gave himself for me*? And sure if we have any *ingenuity* in our Temper, such *Arguments* as these shou'd be of great *force* and *weight* with us.

3. 'Again, Let us by Faith draw *virtue* from a *dying* and now risen Saviour, to enable us to *dye more to Sin*.

He by his *Death* has obtain'd for us that invaluable Gift of his Holy Spirit, by whose Assistance we must *mortify the Deeds of the Body*, Rom. 8. 13. Let us then look up to him for those more abundant *Communications* of his Holy Spirit, that are the precious *Fruits* of his *Death*. And thro' his gracious Aids we may expect that this *gradual Work* of *Mortification* will go on with prosperous Success. The more we come under his
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powerful Conduct and Dominion, the interest of *indwelling Sin* will sensibly decline, and gradually *Languish* and *Expire*. Let us then by *Faith* look up to the *son of God* for that *efficacy* and *virtue* that must enable us to resemble him by dying to Sin. Let us with the Apostle *Paul* earnestly desire to *know the fellowship of his Sufferings*, and to become *here in conformable to his Death*, Phil. 3. 10.

II. Let us consider our *Christian Life* as a *perpetual conflict with temptations to Sin*.

And here our *Faith* in the *son of God* will be of admirable *Use* to us, and particularly in the following *Respects*.

I. We are often prone to be *dejected* when we are assaulted with *grievous* and *hideous Temptations*; we are apt to look upon 'em as certain *Arguments* of our *rejection by God*. Thus 'tis frequent with the *Tempter*, where a melancholly disposition gives him the *Advantage* to cast into the *Minds* of good Men *Atheistical* or *Blasphemous Suggestions*, and thence to sink 'em into woful *Despondency*, and to fill 'em with *dismal apprehensions* of their own *spiritual Condition*.

But

But here the due *exercise* of *faith* in the *son of God* may *relieve* us.

Let us by *Faith* look to a *tempted Saviour*, and we shall find that *Temptations*, even *hideous ones* have been frequently the *Lot* of such as are most *dear to God*. 'Tis therefore no *Sin*, tho' it may be an *Affliction* to be *Tempted*. For the *Son of God* himself had frequent *conflicts* with the *powers of Darkness*. He was *assaulted* with as *horrid Temptations* as any of his *followers*. 'He was not only *tempted to sinful Distrust* on the one hand, and *rash presumption* on the other, but even to no less *hainous and blasphemous a Crime*, than that of *falling down and worshipping the usurping Prince and God of this World*, who allur'd him thereto with an offer of all the *Glories* of it. And how far any new *assaults* of the *Tempter* had an hand in those *Agonies* he endured in the *Garden* and on the *Cross*, we cannot certainly *Determine*, but may make a *probable conjecture* from his saying concerning the time of his *Sufferings*, *Now is the Hour and power of Darkness*.

And if all this beset the *spotless and dear son of God*, how little reason have

we

274 *Faith, the principle of a*

we to think it strange, that he who durst *attack* our *Head*, shou'd *assail* the *Members* too? Nay how little ground have we to conclude, that we are *cast off*, meerly because we are *Tempted*? For these Unbelieving and Blasphemous Thoughts that Satan may inject into our Minds, when rejected with just Abhorrence, are not so much as our *fault*, tho' they may be our great *Trouble*. And as such violent *storms* of *Temptations*, serv'd only to illustrate the *power* of our Blessed Saviour in overcoming 'em, so they may only serve to render the *efficacy* of his *Grace* the more conspicuous, by enabling the *weakest* of his *Members* to *resist* and *repel* 'em. But we see from his *Example*, that 'tis not inconsistent with the *Love* of our heavenly *Father*, to expose the dearest of his *Children* to the strong *Assaults* of the *Tempter*. But farther.

2. We are prone when we consider the *violence* and *strength* of *Temptations*, and our own *inability* to *resist* 'em, to be thence *discourag'd*; so that we are ready to throw down our spiritual Arms in despair of Success, or are *weakned* in our spiritual *Conflicts*, thro' our own *unbelieving Fears*. And

And here again, we must exercise our Faith in the Son of God to encourage and animate our holy Resolutions. And it we look to our once *Tempted*, but now triumphant Saviour, the believing Thoughts of him will inspire us with new courage and Vigour.

We see in his *Example*, that the strongest *Temptations* we can meet with are in themselves *superable*.

For they have been actually overcome by one cloath'd with our Nature, subject to all our sinless Infirmities, and in all points *Tempted as we are*, Heb. 4. 15. He endur'd the most furious storms of the Tempter, when he had the most favourable Opportunity, and the greatest Advantage for making his Assaults upon him. See Matt. 4. He rejected his most alluring offers, even when he propos'd no less specious a Bait than *all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glories of 'em*. He stood firm under the most violent shock of *Persecutions* and *Sufferings*; enduring the Cross, and despising the Shame. These *Temptations* are not therefore *insuperable* to *Flesh* and *Blood*. They are not beyond the strength of humane Nature *renew'd* and *sanctify'd* by

Divine Grace to *resist and overcome*. We shou'd not therefore be discourag'd in our Christian Warfare by any such Apprehensions, as if our *spiritual Enemies* were *Invincible*.

But if it be here objected, 'tis true, these Temptations were not *insuperable* to the *Son of God*, because tho' he was cloathed with our natural Infirmities, yet he was free from those *reliques of Sin* that cleave to us. He therefore might more easily conquer the Tempter, who *found nothing in him* that could give his Temptations any Advantage. Whereas the Victory may be very hard for us to obtain, who carry such dangerous Enemies in our own Breasts to *betray* us into the Tempter's hands.

Here again, we must *exercise our Faith on the Son of God*.

We must look on him as the *Captain of our Salvation*, who has not only *encourag'd* us in our holy Warfare by his own *glorious Example*, but has promis'd all necessary *Assistance* to us in our spiritual Conflicts. We must animate ourselves by that consideration and argument the inspir'd Apostle suggests, *that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the*
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the World, 1 John, 4. 4. We must consider that our blessed Saviour was therefore in all things tempted like us, that he might be capable of being toucht with the feeling of our Infirmities, Heb. 4. 15. He can therefore exercise a more tender and sensible Sympathy with us, and has experimental Bowels of pity towards us : So that having suffer'd thro' Temptation, he is the more able to succour them that are Tempted Heb. 2. 18. We must therefore by Faith look up to him for Grace to help in the time of need, We must beg of him that he would strengthen us with all Might according to his glorious Power Col. 1. 11. That as he overcame the World, he may make us sharers in his happy Victory, nay, that he wou'd make us more than Conquerors over all our spiritual Enemies, that nothing may ever seperate us from his Love, Rom. 8. --- That he who has spoyl'd Principalities and Powers himself, wou'd also bruiſe Satan under our Feet. That he the merciful Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, wou'd keep those Souls we have committed to him in his powerful Hands, out of which none is able to pluck us, John 10. 28. And in-

228 *Faith, the principle of a*
deed, we might well despond when call'd
to *wrestle, not with Flesh and Blood, but*
with Principalities and Powers, &c.
If we were to encounter them with our
own *unassisted force*, if we had not these
supernatural succours, these *auxiliary*
forces from Heaven to expect and rely
on.

Once more.

3. We are sometimes *baffled* by Temp-
tation, and thro' our own carelessness
and security, thro' our own instability
and inconstancy *betray'd* into dangerous
Falls. And this sometimes sinks us into
wretched Despair; so that like a *foyled*
Enemy we are ready to yield up all, and
have no heart to *rally* and *renew* the
Combat.

Here then we have great need to ex-
ercise our *Faith on the Son of God*.

We must therefore in this case consi-
der him as in all things *made like to his*
Brethren, that he might be a *merciful*
High-Priest to make reconciliation for the
sins of the People, Heb. 2. 17. We must
indeed use the utmost care to prevent a-
ny such *wilful Sinning*, as foreseeing the
bitter Effects it will produce. But in
case of our being *foyl'd*, we must not
thro'

thro' wretched *Despair* give all for lost: We must be solicitous to *rise again* by a speedy and deep Repentance, and must then remember, *That if any Man Sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the propitiation for our Sins,* 1 John, 2.

1, 2. We must by *Faith* consider, that there is yet *efficacy* enough in the Redeemer's attoning *Blood* to wash away our Sins of the deepest dye, when truly repented of; and that there is yet *strength* in him sufficient to *recover* us from our most dangerous *Falls*. So that our case is not hopeless, there is a possibility of our being both *recover'd* to Repentance, and *restor'd* unto Favour, if we make early Application to the mercy of God thro' our blessed Mediator.

Thus must we *exercise Faith* in the Son of God, thro' the whole of our present *Life*, considered as a perpetual warfare and contest against Sin, and continual conflict with Temptations to it.

But,

Secondly, Let us farther consider our present *Life* as a daily Intercourse and

230 *Faith, the principle of a
Communion with God, especially in the
duties of his Worship.*

And with respect thereto, we have
daily occasion for the lively exercise of
Faith in the son of God.

And that on such accounts as these.

1. In all our serious *Addresses* to God,
we are apt to be *discourag'd* by the ap-
prehensions of that infinite *Distance*
there is between him and us. The live-
ly Thoughts of so *awful* and *tremen-*
dous a Majesty are ready to *overwhelm*
and *confound* us : So that we can scarce
believe that he will vouchsafe to con-
verse with, or have any regard to the
services of such *vile* and *despicable Worms*
as we are.

To *relieve* us under these Apprehen-
sions, we must by *Faith* look up to the
son of God, that *bright Image of the in-*
visible Deity (as he is styl'd by this A-
postle, Col. 1. 15.) And the thoughts
of *God manifested in the Flesh*, will be
more *familiar* and *encouraging* to us.
His *dazling Glory* is as it were *temper'd*
and *accommodated* to our *View*, as it
shines to us in the Face of his incarnate
Son. And sure we cannot doubt *God's*
readiness to converse with Man, when
he

he therefore took upon him our Nature, that he might encourage our free *Access* to him; and *came down to us* that we might in our devout Thoughts and Affections more freely and familiarly *ascend to him*. And as nothing can dispose us more for delightful communion with God, than to be assur'd of his tender *Love to us*, and to have our Hearts influenc'd with *Love to him*; so in order thereto, we must by *Faith* look up to the blessed *Jesus*, that greatest *Gift* and brightest *Mirroure of Divine Love*; and in him we may behold such a clear *discovery and demonstration* of the unparallel'd *Love of God*, as may both enkindle in our Hearts the most fervent Affection to him, and give us the greatest ground of ingenuous *Affiance and Trust* in him. How does he *Love us*, who *when we loved not him, sent his own Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins?* Joh. i. 4. 10. How infinitely tender were his Affections to us, when he *spared not his own Son* that he might *spare us*, but delivered him up as a *Victim and sin-Offering* to his Justice, that we might be *embraced in his Arms of Love*! Nay, how has he *lov'd us*, who has *Cancell'd all*
our

our past Guilt, *Adopted* us into his *Family*, and sent the *spirit of his Son* into our *Hearts*, as the *Earnest of our heavenly Inheritance*? And how shou'd all these *Assurances* of his *Ardent and Matchless Love* remove all our *suspicious and mis-giving Thoughts*? Nay, how shou'd the *Contemplation* of our having such a *Mediator with him* embolden us to come to him with ingenuous *Hope* as a *reconciled Father*, as the *God of Peace*, as the *Father of Mercies*, and the *God of all Consolation*! Heb. 13. 20. 2 Cor. 1. 3. To what end has he appointed such a *Mediator*, but that we may now with filial freedom *draw nigh to him*? Nay, how comfortable an *Emblem* and *Pledge* has he given us of our *Communion with him* in the *Unceivable but strictest Union* of our *human Nature* to the *Eternal Word*, in order to the *Constituting* him a suitable *High-Priest* and *Mediator* for us?

2. Whereas we are prone to be *discouraged* with the sense of our frequent *Indisposition* for those holy spiritual Duties in which we shou'd *Converse* with God; Nay whereas we are conscious of manifold *Defects and Failures* in the best
of

of 'em, We are thence apt to fear, that an Infinitely Holy God will never accept so defiled Offerings and Services as these are.

Now against this Discouragement we must be relieved by the Exercise of Faith on the Son of God.

When we are conscious of our great Indisposition for those holy Duties and frequent Deadness in 'em; we must by Faith look up to the Son of God, the Head of all vital Influence, and the Repository of Divine Grace. We must derive from him more abundant measures of that Spirit of Adoption that will enable us to cry *Aba Father*, Rom. 8. 15. And that B. Spirits in all our Prayers and Praises will help our Infirmities, Vers. 26. (by giving us a clearer discovery and more feeling sense both of our Necessities and our Mercies; by exciting our ardent Desires and fervent Gratitude; by enlarging all holy Affections; by assisting and elevating our natural Faculties to more vigorous Exercise in those Holy Duties.) Nay to him we may also look by Faith as a pattern of fervent Devotion; even to him who pray'd with strong cries and tears, who continued whole Nights in
that

that Heavenly Exercise, and by an elegant Parable instructed us to Pray always without tainting. see Heb. 5. 7. Luke 6. 12. Luke 17. 1.

Are we conscious of manifold sinful defects and failures that cleave to our Duties, and therefore under doubts and fears about their acceptance with God? We must here seek relief by the believing Contemplation of our great High Priest, thro' whom all our spiritual Sacrifices when offer'd in sincerity, shall be accepted by God 1 Pet. 2. 5. We must look up to him as perfuming all our imperfect Offerings with the Incense of his Merits Rev. 8. 3. He is Worthy, tho' we are most Unworthy. There is sufficient Vertue in his Blood, even to expiate the Iniquities of our Holy Things; and sufficient Merit in his perfect Obedience, to recommend our defective Duties to the Divine Acceptance and Rewards. We come in his Name to the Father, and not in our own; and on his account we are assur'd, That whatever we ask in his Name (according to the Will of God) shall be granted. John 14. 13. 16. 23. Having then such a High Priest over the House of God, and such liberty

liberty to enter into the Holiest, thro' the Blood of Jesus; in that new and living Way consecrated for us; let us draw near with a true Heart, in full assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience; and our Bodies washed with pure Water, Heb. 10. 19, 20. &c.

But to proceed,

Thirdly, We may farther consider the Life of a Christian as an holy and useful converse with Men.

And that it may be so, the exercise of our Faith on the Son of God will be of admirable Use to 'em.

For, 1. We must by Faith set him before us as the most glorious exemplar and pattern of such an eminently Holy and fruitful Conversation.

Let us by Faith look to the incarnate Son of God, and see with what ardent Zeal he promoted the Glory of his Heavenly Father; insomuch that 'twas justly said of him, That the Zeal of his House had eaten him up, John 2. 17.

2. e. Had entirely taken up his Thoughts

236 *Faith, the principle of a*

Thoughts and Affections, and engross'd his Time and Cares. And he himself cou'd herein appeal to God, and say, *Father I have glorify'd thy Name*, John 17. 5. How accurate, how affectionate Obedience did he pay to his Heavenly Father, who cou'd say, *It was his Meat to do his Will*, and that he *always did the Things that pleased him?* John 4. 34.

What a God-like propension had he to all acts of *beneficent kindness* and *Love*, of whose daily Conversation we have that amiable Description, *That he went about doing good?* Acts 10. 38. His whole Life was as it were one continued act of *compassion* to the Bodies and the Souls of Men. Nay what an ardent desire was he inflam'd with, of *promoting the Salvation of Souls*; who besides the unwearied *Labours* of his Life in his personal Ministry, thought not his *precious Blood* too great a price to be paid for their *Redemption*? How amiable a pattern was he of *mortification* and *contempt of the World*; of deep *humility* and *lowliness of Mind*; of admirable *Patience* and *Meekness*; of unmoved *Constancy* under the greatest of *Injuries*

Injuries and Sufferings, and of a *forgiving Spirit* towards the unjust Authors of 'em? Let us then often by *Faith* contemplate these *Graces* as they shone in him with so amiable and bright a Lustre, that we may thence reproach our selves with the *Decays* of our *Zeal* and *Love*; and with the *barrenness* of our comparatively *unfruitful* and *unexemplary* Conversation. *Faith* shou'd continually present the beautiful *unblurred Copy* to our Eye, that our Life may be a fairer *Transcript* of it. And O how powerful *Motives* shou'd it suggest to us, to aspire to a nearer *Conformity* to him, whose *Followers* we pretend to be, that the *same Mind* may be in us, that we may tread in his *Steps*, and walk even as he walked, Phil. 11. 5. 1 Pet. 11. 21. 1 John 11. 6.

Again,

2. Our *Faith* must derive from him as our *Vine*, those *vital Influences* that shall enable us to *abound* in these *fruits* of *Holiness*.

We must go about even all our *relative Duties* in a dependance on his *Strength*; we must perform 'em as a
service

Service to him, as well as expect thro' him the Acceptance of 'em. We must thus do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Col. 3. 17. We must draw vital Spirits from him our mystical Head, to capacitate us his weak Members for our particular Function and Service according to the particular Place and Station we bear in his Mystical Body. Without him We can do nothing; but thro' him strengthening us we shall be enabled to do all things, John 15. Phil. 4. 13.

Fourthly, Let us consider the Life of a true Christian as a continued prosecution of the Heavenly Glory.

And here our Faith in the Son of God will be of admirable Use to us.

For,

1. We are prone to entertain too doubtful Apprehensions of the Life to come. The Glories of that future World are invisible to us, and seem to be at a great Distance from us. And our unbelieving Minds are sometimes ready to regard 'em as uncertain Things, so that thro' the weakness of our Faith they do not make those powerful Impressions they should upon us.

Now

Now here we must exercise our faith
 on the Son of God. We must look on
 him that came down from Heaven to
 reveal the unseen Glories of it to us,
 and to give us the most satisfying Assu-
 rance of their Reality and Certainty.
 'Tis he has abolish'd Death and brought
 Life and Immortality to Light, 2 Tim.
 1. 10. 'Tis he has publish'd that new
 and everlasting Covenant establish'd on
 better Promises, even those of an Hea-
 venly Inheritance, Heb. 8. 6. 'Tis he
 has actually risen from the Dead and vi-
 sibly ascended into Heaven, that his Glo-
 rious Resurrection and Ascension might
 be the Earnest, the Pledge and Security
 of ours. 'Tis he has entered as our Fore-
 runner within the Veil, Heb. 6. ult. and
 is gone into his Father's House to pre-
 pare a place for us in those Mansions of
 Glory. 'Tis he that intercedes for us,
 that those whom the Father has given him
 may be where he is, and may behold his
 Glory, John 17. 24. 'Tis he has pro-
 mis'd to come again, even to raise up
 these mortal and corruptible Bodies to a
 state of Incorruption and Glory, that
 Death may be entirely swallow'd up of
 Life. And shall we not credit a Reve-
 lation

lation of the Life to come, that is so agreeable to the obscurer Notices of the Light of Nature, so worthy of the blessed God to make, and that is brought us by so glorious and credible a Messenger as his incarnate Son, who has given us such satisfying Assurances and Pledges of it? Sure it shou'd be our Language, Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief. Again,

2. We are too prone to entertain dark as well as doubtful Apprehensions of that future state. Our Strangeness to the unseen World, to it's glorious Inhabitants, to their way of Living and of mutual Converse, nay to the whole of their State, does greatly abate the Ardour of our Heavenly Desires and Hopes.

To remedy this, we must live by Faith in the Son of God.

And indeed the lively Contemplations of him as the Lord of the Invisible World will greatly help to Familiarize it to our Minds. Let us behold him there exalted in our Nature as the Head of Angels as well as Glorified Saints. And why shou'd we think strange of going to that Blessed Saviour when we are conscious that we have sincerely lov'd

lov'd and serv'd, and trusted in? Why shou'd we think strange of going to those *Spirits of just Men made perfect*, many of whom have been the dear *Companions* of our *Faith* and *Hope* here below? Nay why shou'd we be shie of the converse of those glorious *Angels* that have been *ministering Spirits to us*, while we were *Heirs of Salvation* here on Earth? What tho' we know almost as little of their *way of Living and Acting*, as the *Child* in the *Womb* does of the *Affairs* of *this World*; 'tis sufficient that our Blessed Lord *knows it for us*; that he is gone to prepare a *sutable Place for us* in those *Heavenly Mansions*; that *he has the Keys of the unseen World*, as well as *Death*; that his *Angels* shall safely *convoy* our departing *Spirits* into his blissful *Presence*, so that when we are *absent from the Body*, *we shall be present with him*. If we can now love him, tho' we never saw him; if our *Faith* in an unseen *Saviour* can now enable us to rejoyce with joy unspeakable, and full of *Glory*: Sure it shou'd make us long to go where we shall see and enjoy him whom our *Souls* love!

3. We are prone to entertain *discouraging* Apprehensions concerning our own title to the Heavenly Glory. And these tend to abate that *spiritual Joy* which the prospect of it shou'd fill our Hearts with.

From those *uncomfortable Doubts* we must be reliev'd by the lively exercise of *Faith in the Son of God*.

Sometimes our *Hopes* of that future Glory are damp'd by the pressure of our *Afflictions* and *Miseries* here. And we can hardly think that if God had design'd us to be the *Heirs* of that Heavenly *Felicity*, he wou'd expose us to so manifold *Calamities* and *Straits* here.

To relieve us against this, we must look by *Faith* to the *Son of God*, who tho' *Heir of all Things* was here expos'd to such *Poverty* and *Indigence*; that he tells us, *Tho' the Foxes had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had Nests, yet the Son of Man had not where to lay his Head*. He tho' design'd for a state of the highest *Exaltation*, yet was here under the lowest degree of *Abasement*; was a *Man of Sorrows*, and acquainted with *Griefs*. He, tho' he now wears the *brightest Crown*, yet once endured
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the Cross, and past thro' Sufferings unto Glory. 'Tis no wonder then that those shou'd be conform'd to him in his Sufferings, who are design'd to be sharers in his Glory. 'Tis no unusual thing for those to receive their evil Things here for whom everlasting Consolation is reserv'd.

Again, Sometimes the sense of our great *Unworthiness* damps our *Hopes*, especially when we consider the comparative *unsuitableness* of our *Temper*, to that *Heavenly State and Life*.

But here we must *exercise Faith in the son of God*. We must consider *Heaven* not as a *Debt* due to the *intrinsic Excellence and Dignity* of our *Services*, but as the *gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. 6. ult. We must expect it as a *Reward of Grace*. We must hope for it as an *Inheritance* to which we are *Adopted* by virtue of our *relation* to our *Blessed Saviour*, Rom. 8. 17. We must consider, that tho' *sincere Holiness* be necessary to make us *meet for that Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, yet *perfect and sinless Holiness* is not requir'd to entitle us to it. We may therefore look for the *Mercy of our*

244 *Faith, the principle of a*
Lord Jesus Christ to eternal Life. And
we may rely on him for the conti-
nued assistances of his Holy Spirit, to
carry on the great Work of Sanctifica-
tion, that is preparatory for our final Sal-
vation. He that has begun that good
Work in us will finish it.

And to add no more. Whereas the
apprehensions of *Death* and *Judgment*
in the way, are apt to render the
Thoughts of our future State less Com-
fortable; we must be reliev'd against
'em, by the lively exercise of *Faith* in
the son of God.

And O how comfortably may we
even under the prospect of *Death* look
up to him, who has by *Death* destroyed
him that had the power of *Death*, and
delivered them who thro' fear of *Death*
were all their Life-time subject unto Bon-
dage, Heb. 2. 15. He has by his *Death*
taken away that guilt of *Sin*, which is
the bitterness and sting of *Death*, 1 Cor.
15. 55. He has given us the fullest
Assurance, that *Death* shall be entirely
Abolish'd, and *Mortality* swallow'd up
of *Life*: And O how shou'd it allay
the terror of *Death* to be persuaded,
that we encounter it as a disarm'd and

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conquer'd Enemy that Christ has Triumph'd over, and assur'd all his Followers of an entire Conquest of ! Nay, how shou'd it sweeten the thoughts of Death to consider, that if for us to live be Christ, to dye shall be (great) gain ? Phil. 1. 23.

And sure it shou'd relieve us against any frightful Thoughts of Judgment, to look by Faith to our Blessed Redeemer himself as our final Judge. We can never think he will condemn those by his final Sentence, whom he has here justify'd by his Blood. He will never charge their Guilt upon 'em, who have with a penitent Heart fled to him as their only Refuge and Propitiation; nor will he ever exclude those from his Heavenly Inheritance, whom his sanctifying Grace has prepar'd for it : No, all such may expect to hear that doom from him, which his gracious Lips once pronounc'd on Earth, Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepar'd for you from before the Foundation of the Word, Mat. 25. 38.

Thus must we live by the Faith of the Son of God.

And

246 *Faith, the principle of &c.*

And it shou'd be a very powerful *Incitement* thus to live to him, when we consider him, as *him that loved us, and gave himself for us.* We thus owe the whole of that *Life* to his *Glory* and *Service*, which he has *bought* at the *expence* of his *own.* And indeed a lively *Faith* in him will enable us to feel here- in the sweet and irresistible *constraints* of his *Love.*

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FINIS.

SERMONS

ON

The LOVE of

G O D.

SERM. I.

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verse, 35, 36, &c.

By J. B.

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On the Love of
G O D.

SERM. I.

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verf 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40.

35. Then one of 'em which was a Lawyer
askt him a Question, tempting him, and say-
ing,

36. Master, which is the great Command-
ment in the Law?

37. Jesus said unto him Thou shalt love the
Lord thy God: with all thy Heart, and with
all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.

38. This is the first and great Command-
ment.

39. And the second is like unto it; Thou
shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.

40. On these two Commandments hang all
the Law and the Prophets. The

THE Words I have read, contain the noblest Subject in practical Religion; of which if we cou'd speak with the *Tongue of Angels* as well as *Men*, our Discourses cou'd neither exhaust it, nor indeed rise up to the Dignity of it.

We may from this excellent Passage clearly see how justly our *Blessed Saviour* declares, that he came not to *destroy the Law*, but to *fulfil it*, Mat. 5. 17. He is so far from discharging his Followers from the Observance of the *moral Law*, that he has not only clear'd the true *Extent*, and vindicated the *Perfection* of it, but has enforc'd our *Obedience* to it by all the most powerful *Motives* that can be drawn, either from the *Obligations of Redeeming Love*, or from the *prospect of Eternal Rewards and Punishments*. And because an accurate enquiry into all the *particular Branches* of the Moral Law is a laborious Work that requires Time and Study. Our blessed Lord has in condescension to our *Weakness*, with admirable *Wisdom* reduc'd the *Moral Law* to these two comprehensive *Heads* as the

Sum-

Summary of it. And indeed a due contemplation of these *two Commands* will lead us into, and facilitate our Discovery of all the *particular Duties* requir'd either in the *first* or *second Table*. And for these *two*, 'tis no way difficult for Christians of the lowest Form in the School of Christ, either to apprehend the *Meaning*, or to discern the *Reasonableness* and *Equity* of 'em. And O that it were as easy to persuade you to the due *Observance* of 'em! I shall by Divine Assistance attempt to do *both* in the following Discourses.

To clear my way thereto, I need only take notice of the *Occasion* of these Words of our Lord, which I have now recited.

We read in the Verse foregoing the Text, *That when the Pharisees heard that our Saviour had put the Sadducees to silence, (viz. by solving their vain Objection against the Resurrection) they were gather'd together; and one of 'em being a Lawyer askt him a Question tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law?*

The

The *Querist* was in respect of his *Sect* a *Pharisee*; but in respect of his *Employment* or *Profession* a *Lawyer*; either a publick *Expounder* and *Teacher* of the *Law* in the *Synagogue*, or one that Taught it more *privately* in some *School*. I shall not now debate, whether a *Scribe* and a *Lawyer* were the same *Office*, or whether (as some suppose) the *former's* Talent lay chief in, resolving *speculative Points*, the latter in resolving more *practical Cases*. Nor need we be solicitous in our Enquiry, whether his *Tempting* Christ imply here his having a malicious Design to entrap and ensnare him; or his only intending to make a Tryal of his Wisdom and Skill in the *resolving* this important *Question*. Tho' if this *Lawyer* be the same with the *Scribe* mention'd in *Mark* 12. 28, &c. 'tis more probable by the ingenuous temper he discovers, that he proposes this *Question* rather with an *honest*, than with an ill and *malicious* Design.

As to the *Question* it self, *Which is the great Commandment*? No doubt, the meaning of it is; *Which is the greatest*? The *Positive* being put for the *Superlative* Degree, as is usual in the Language the *Jews* then us'd. And therefore

therefore in the Evangelist *Mark*, the Question is, *Which is the first Commandment?* i. e. In point of *Importance and Dignity*.

'Tis highly probable this was a *Question* much debated at that time among the *Jewish Doctors*; we know some of 'em have given the preference to the *Command* about *Circumcision*; others to that relating to the *Sabbath*; others to the *Law* about their *Sacrifices*: To which *Opinion* the Answer of the *Scribe* in the Evangelist *Mark*, 12. 33. v. seems to refer.

But our *Saviour's Answer* we have in the Text.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, &c. This is the first and great Commandment.

And he adds, *The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy Self; on these two, hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

So that our *Saviour* sums up all the *Duties* both of the *first* and *second Table* in these *two* great and extensive *Commands*: and this with admirable wisdom in condescension to the narrowness and im-

imperfection of our Understandings, that the most ignorant might have before their Eyes at once both a *plain* and yet a very *full* and *comprehensive* View of their *Duty* both towards *God* and towards *Men*. How easy is this compendious Summary of practical Religion and Holiness to be not only *remembered*, but competently *apprehended* and *understood*? How justly might the Prophet, say, *He hath shewed thee, O Man what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee, even to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah 6. 8.

So has our Lord more plainly reveal'd what the Divine Law chiefly Enjoyns, viz. *To love the Lord, &c.* and *to love thy Neighbour, &c.*

Not that we must imagine, that this great Duty of *Loving God*, does in its formal Notion *include* all other Duties of the *first Table*, such as *fearing Him*, *subjection to Him*, *Faith* and *Trust in Him*; or the external Duties of *Prayer*, *Thanksgiving*, *hearing his Word*, &c. 'Tis only imply'd, that the *love of God* is the radical principle of all other Duties to Him, which are chiefly acceptable

Serm. I. of GOD. 255

ble so far as they are *Actuated* and *Influenc'd* by this.

And indeed, none was more fit to inculcate this great Command of *Divine Love*, than the *Son of God*, who came from the *Bosom of the Father*; to bring us the most bright and astonishing Revelation of the *Amiability* and *Love of God*, as the powerful *Attractive* to our love of him; and who sends his *Holy Spirit* into our *Hearts*, to form in us this *filial Affection* to our *Heavenly Father*.

And O that that blessed Spirit may shed Abroad that *Divine Love* abundantly in our *Hearts*, while we speak and hear of it! May that comprehensive Law that was once wrote in *Tables of Stone*, be now engraven on the *fleshy Tables of our Hearts*! May we, as the *two Disciples*, while our Saviour is here speaking of *Divine Love* to us, find by happy Experience that our *Hearts burn within us*, those holy *Flames* being enkindled there!

I shall therefore begin with the *first Branch* of the Text, viz.

That to love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, is the first and great Commandment.

In

In treating on this excellent Subject, I shall consider.

First, *The Commandment it self*, and Secondly the *Importance and Excellency* of it, intimated to us in our Saviours calling it, *The First and Great Commandment.*

First I shall consider, *The Commandment it self*, viz *To love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.*

And here we may distinctly consider, I. *The Object* of our Love, the Lord our God, II. *The Act* of Loving him, and what is included therein. III. *The Extent and Measure* of the Duty commanded to love him *with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.*

Of these in their Order ; And

I. Let us consider, the *Object* here propos'd to our Love, viz. *The Lord our God.*

And by these Expressions he seems to be represented as the proper *Object* of our Love, both considered *in himself*, and in the *Relation* he stands unto us.

I. He is the proper *Object* of our Love consider'd *in himself.*

He

He is the *Lord* or *Jehovah*, A self-existent, independent, Eternal and every way most perfect Being. He is an infinitely glorious and amiable Majesty, of unlimited power, of unsearchable Wisdom, of boundless Goodness, of unspotted Purity, of inflexible Justice, of unchangeable Truth and Faithfulness, &c.

In his adorable Nature all those Excellencies and Beauties, all those Perfections and Glories even in their highest exaltation and lustre, are to be found as in their Source and Centre, that can possibly recommend any Being to our highest *Love*. So that a *Superlative Affection* to him is a tribute which the incomparable *Amiableness* of his *Nature* gives him a just Title and Claim to from all those to whom he has imparted a reasonable Nature capable to Discern it. Nay, he deserves a *Love* as *infinite* as the *Excellency* of his own Being, if we were capable of paying it to him, much more does he deserve the *utmost* of what we can give. Who shou'd be Lov'd, if not he that is in the Highest Measure, or rather without all Limit and Measure, possess'd of e-

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very thing that is truly *Lovely*, and capable to attract a rational Affection? And indeed the more our *Love of God* arises from the contemplation of his own *Perfections*; the more we Love him on the account of what he is in himself, our *Love* is the more *Disinterested* and *Pure*, and aspires the nearer to its due *Height and Perfection*; Of which more hereafter.

But,

2. *God* is the proper *Object* of our *Love*, consider'd in his *Relation to us*.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

Now as he may be styl'd our *God*, both in respect of that *common Relation* he bears to all *Mankind*, and in respect of that *special peculiar Relation* he bears to all *good Men*; so under both he is most deserving of our *Superlative Love*.

He is a proper *Object* of our highest *Love*, as he is the *Author* of our *Beings*, and we are the *Work of his Hands*. A superlative Affection is due to the *Father of Spirits* from his own *Off-spring*. And much more is he the deserving *Object* of our tenderest *Love*, as he is the *gracious Preserver* and *Benefactor* of
our

our Lives, and the *Fountain* of all our *Mercies*. To him our best Affections shou'd be consecrated, from whom we have derived not only our *Being* and *Life*, but all the necessary *Supports* and *Comforts* of it.

He is yet the more deserving *Object* of our Love, as he is our God by peculiar *Relation*; as he is the gracious *Restorer* of our lapsed Nature by Jesus Christ our blessed Mediator, and thro' him our *reconcilable God*. And yet much more as he is our actually *reconciled Father*, *Redeemer* and *Sanctifier*, our God in the Bonds of an everlasting *Covenant*, and our *Portion* and *Happiness* for ever. And 'tis indeed our apprehensions of God as standing in such a *spiritual Relation* to us that most powerfully diffuse this Love to him in our Hearts, and raise it to the greatest Height and Fervour. We shall then most ardently Love him, when by the *Spirit of Adoption* we are enabled to cry *Abba Father*. Of which more hereafter.

But,

II. I come to consider, the *Act* it self, of *Loving God*, and what is included therein.

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Now

Now the general Notion of *Love* includes various *Acts* both of the *Mind* and *Will*, according to the various grounds of it in the *Object* lov'd.

If we regard the *Excellency* of those we *Love*, our *Love* imports our *High Esteem* of 'em; if we regard their capacity of being *beneficial* to us, our *Love* imports either our earnest *desire* of *Enjoying* 'em, or our *complacency* and *delight* in it: If we regard their *Love* to us and the *beneficial* fruits of it, our *Love* includes affectionate *Gratitude*, if we regard the *Interest* of the *Person* lov'd, our *Love* includes our *Good will* thereto.

And all these several *Acts* concur in our *Love* to *God*.

As;

I. Our *Love* to him includes Our *high Esteem* and *Veneration* for him, on the account of his infinitely amiable *Excellencies*.

For all *Love* supposes some *Excellency* we apprehend in the *object* lov'd. And even the *abstracted* *Excellency* of an object is sufficient to recommend it as amiable, tho' we our selves enjoy it not: As the
excellent

excellent Qualities of a worthy Person shou'd oblige us to honour and love him tho' at never so great a distance from us, and incapable to lay any particular obligation upon us. But our *Will* and *Affections* can never be carried out towards an *object*, which our Judgments do not apprehend some attractive *amiableness* in.

The *first step* therefore of *divine Love* is a profound *Admiration* of the infinitely Blessed God as the *first*, the *greatest*, and the *best* of Beings. We love him, when we entertain *adoring thoughts* of him as the Centre and Spring of all amiable perfections; When the rays of his transcendent Beauty and Excellency, shining out in the works of *nature, grace,* and *glory*, affect and ravish our minds, and represent him to our thoughts, as a Being of *matchless Glory to whom none is like* or can ever be compared. We are then indeed ready to cry out, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides Thee,* Ps. 73. 25.

And indeed if the dark *shadows* of *borrow'd* and *finite Excellency* that appear in our *fellow-creatures* can so pow-

2 On the Love

must attract our affectionate Esteem,
 How much more shou'd the amazing
 brightness and Lustre of his infinite per-
 fections do it? How unconceivably ami-
 able do his works and his word represent
 him to us! That Almighty Power, that in-
 finite Wisdom, that unlimited Goodness
 that first made and form'd, and does still
 sustain and rule this vast Universe, and
 diffuses it's beneficial Emanations to
 all the parts of it, that spotless Purity
 and Justice that appear in the administra-
 tions of the Divine Government, but
 especially that admirable Wisdom and
 unparallel'd Grace that shines out in the
 great Work of our Redemption and
 Salvation. All these Attributes concur
 as so many strokes to pourtray to us the
 amiable Glory of God. And yet even
 these are but (as he calls 'em) his Back-
 parts, rather than his Face, Exod. 33.
 23. Yet on the account of 'em, what
 reason have we to say, O Lord our God,
 How excellent is thy Name in all the
 Earth: Ps. 8. and last v. We must
 therefore form in our Minds the most
 magnifying and honourable Thoughts of
 him. He must appear in our Eye as
 altogether and incomparably Lovely;
 and

Serm. I. of G O D. 205

and not only *lovely* on the account of his *glorious perfections* absolutely consider'd, but also *Relatively* as they represent him to be a most *sutable Good* to us, for so he must be esteem'd and valu'd, if we pretend to Love him. Which leads me to consider.

2. Our *love to God* as it regards him as a *sutable Good* to us.

Our apprehensions of the *Excellency* of an Object, usually excite in us some proportionable *Desire* to secure a *propriety* in it, and gain the *Possession* of it; and when 'tis *Possess'd*, they raise in us a proportionable *Satisfaction* and *Delight* in it. We love a valuable *Friend* or *Relation*, when we desire the most intimate *Union* and *Converse* with 'em, and take great *pleasure* in what we do *Enjoy* of it.

Thus our *loving God* includes,

Our earnest *Desire* of a *propriety* in Him, of the most intimate *converse* with Him, and *fullest enjoyment* of Him. For Love aspires to the *fruition* of the object Lov'd, and carries out the Soul in intense *Desires* after it. We then love God when we earnestly breath after an Interest in him as our reconciled God and Father; when we above all Things

desire to stand on good Terms with him ; when we covet his *Loving kindness* and *Favour* as the best of Blessings ; when we ardently seek the strictest *Alliance* and *Union* to him ; when we vehemently long for those peculiar *Communications* of his *Grace*, which he vouchsafes to those that are the Objects of his delightful Love ; when we fervently desire to know, to resemble, and to enjoy him more. When as the *Hart* pants after the water-brooks, so do our Souls pant after God, *Pf. 42. 1.* thirsting for the refreshing streams of his Love ; When our Souls tend with vigorous Motions towards him as the Centre of their Rest, in whose protection and care, in whose Amity and Communion they place their highest happiness here, and in whose immediate presence and Converse they expect the perfections of endless Joy and Bliss.

Even such ardent *Desires* towards God do's divine Love kindle, as will render our Distance from him afflictive and grievous. Love renders the separation or absence of it's Objects uneasy to us. And thus when the children of God either enjoy his presence in a very imperfect degree,

gree; or find their wonted Converse with him interrupted, that Love to him that cannot express it self in *Delight* and *Joy* will vent it self in *sighs* and *Tears*. Thus when holy Souls want the benefit of those publick Ordinances wherein they were wont to enjoy so sweet intercourse with God, their Love will appear in such sorrowful complaints and moans as those of the Psalmist, *My Soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My Tears have been my meat night and day, &c. When I remember these things I pour out my Soul in me; For I had gone with the multitude, I went with 'em to the House of God, &c. Pl. 42 23. &c.* If any wilful offences have ecclips'd the Light of God's Countenance, and reduc'd their Souls into disconsolate Darkness, their Love to God will vent it self in ingenuous grief and self-abhorence, in earnest crys for renewed Pardon and Peace; such as those of the devout Psalmist: *Hide thy face, O Lord, from my Sins, and blot out mine Iniquities; Make me to hear the voice of Joy and Gladness, that the bones thou hast broken may rejoyce, &c. Cast me not away from thy presence, nor take thine*

shine Holy Spirit from me. If they apprehend themselves under any Divine Desertions, how do's holy Love extort from 'em such earnest Expostulations as those, *Lord, why castest thou off my Soul, why hidest thou thy Face from me?* Their Estrangement and distance from God they resent as a most *undesirable* and *disconsolate state*: And therefore are restless till they have by renewed *Repentance* recover'd their freedom of access to God, and their delightful intercourse with him. And alas how often do our miscarriages and folly occasion our *divine Love* to vent it self much more in our lamenting his *absence* when *withdrawn* from us, than in our delighting in the reviving sense of his gracious *presence* with us.

But our *Love to God* consider'd as a *sutable Good* to us, do's also include our highest *Delight in him*, so far as we can discern our interest in him, and have even here some imperfect Enjoyment of him.

What we *love* we are *pleased* in the possession of. Love implying the complacency and Rest of the Soul in the Object *belov'd* so far as 'tis enjoy'd. And we then truly love God, when our Souls tends

tends towards him as their *exceeding* (and satisfying) Joy; When we value our Interest in him, and our Expectations from him above ten thousand Worlds. When we relish *his Loving-kindness as better than Life*, and feel more reviving gladness diffused into our hearts by the *light of his countenance*, then by the *affluence of all Earthly Enjoyments*; When we take the highest pleasure in the nearest approaches to him, and tast that satisfying bliss in the peculiar Communications of his grace and Love that nothing else can yeild; And when the lively hopes of our endless and full *fruition* of him is to our Souls the sweetest *foretast* of heavenly Joy. Nay as men usually rest satisfied in possessing what they principally love, whatever else they may lose or want, so will Divine Love prompt us to *rejoyce in God* even tho' Earthly comforts shou'd fail, from a clear Persuasion that he alone is our all-sufficient Portion and Happiness, Heb. 3. 17, 18. Nay as human Love endears to us all *occasions* of conversing with thole we have a strong affection for, so will divine Love render all *opportunities* of access to God and intercourse with him *delightful*

lightful to us. We shall approach with joy to his Courts and account one day spent there better than a thousand elsewhere, Pf. 84. 10. One hour's Communion with him will be preferable to an Age spent in Vanity and Sin. We shall account it good for us to draw nigh to him, and be ready with the Psalmist to call to others, O Taste and see that the Lord is good: Pf. 34. 8.

But,

3. Our Love to God as it is occasion'd by the *Benefits* we derive from him, includes ingenuous *Gratitude*.

For not only the *Excellency* of a Person, but his particular *Goodness* to us, is a just ground for our *Affection* to him. And the greater *Obligations* he has laid upon us, they shou'd *Endear* him the more. What is the ground of that ingenuous Love that *Children* bear to their *Parents*? Is it not, that from them they have derived their Natural Life, and on their Care and Love they depend for the Preservation and Supports of it? So that their Love includes a *grateful Sense* of the *Benefits* they have receiv'd. And how much more then shou'd our Love
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of the Blessed God our *greatest* and *best* Benefactor, include in it the most *thankful* *resentment* of the innumerable Benefits we have derived from him the Fountain of all our Good. We then truly *Love* him, when all his manifold and admirable *Mercies*, which he daily surrounds us with, and shours down upon us with a liberal Hand (notwithstanding all our Unworthiness and Misdeserts) leave a deep impression upon our Hearts, and engrave an indelible *Law* of *Gratitude* there. We then *Love* him, when we carry in our Breasts that ingenuous Affection towards him, that an *indigent Beneficiary* and *Client* owes to his *gracious Patron* and *Benefactor*; that a *pardon'd Rebel* owes to his *gracious reconcil'd Sovereign*, and that a *forlorn Wretch* can owe to him that shou'd freely *advance* him from a State of the lowest *VWant* and *Misery*, to a State of the highest *Dignity* and *Honour*, *Glory* and *Blessedness*. And indeed did but our grateful *Love* to God bear proportion to the *Greatness* or the *Number* of his *Benefits*, to how immense a sum it wou'd it rise! Of which more in the Application.

4. Our *Love to God* as it respects his *Interest*, imports our *Good-will* to it, and *Zeal* for it.

Love does necessarily import *Good-will* to the object lov'd; and therefore prompts us to wish the *Welfare* of those we *Love*, to do what lies in our power to promote it, and to obviate the contrary; and it renders their *Welfare* and *Satisfaction* highly pleasing us.

'Tis true, indeed, we are no way capable of Expressing our *Love to God* in a strict sense, by promoting his real *Welfare*; Our (narrow finite) *goodness* cannot extend to him. He stands in need of no services from his Highest Creatures, to heighten his real *Felicity*. He is abundantly enrich'd with his own infinite *Fulness*, and requires obedience from us as a *means*, not to his *Happiness*, but our own. But yet out of his infinite *Condescension* and *Goodness*, he is pleas'd to speak of some *Concernments* and *Interests* as if they were his own. Some things he declares to be highly pleasing and others to be no less *Offensive* to him. Thus the *manifestation* of his own *Glory* in the recovery of lapsed Sinners to his *Favour* and *Image*, and
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in their final Salvation, is in his account and Language his great *Interest*. He declares himself highly Delighted with every thing that tends to the Advancement thereof, as a *Service* done to himself, and expresses a just displeasure against the contrary, as the greatest *Dis-service* and *Injury* to him. He declares himself *pleas'd*, when his just *Laws* are *Reverenc'd* and *Obej'd*; and grievously *Offended* when they are insolently *Despis'd* and *Trampled on*.

Now our *Love to God* will express it self both in our affectionate *Concern* to promote what he accounts his *Interest*, and in our *Delight* in the success and advancement thereof.

Our Love to God includes our *affectionate concern to promote what he is pleas'd to account his Interest*. We then love God when his *Interest* and *Glory*, are infinitely *dear* and *valuable* to us, even dearer than any that the *Flesh* can call our own. When we not only ardently wish for the Advancement of his Cause, and the Encrease of his Kingdom, but are ready to contribute our utmost towards it: We then *love God* when we earnestly desire and endeavour, that

that the glorious Designs of his grace may be crown'd with the most prosperous success, that the good-pleasure of his will may be fulfill'd, and that he may be more universally *known* and *honoured*, *served*, and *obeyed* in the World: And when whatever is opposite hereto, is most *greivous* and *afflictive* to us. We then *love him*, when we our selves are sollicitous that our desires, our Aims and Endeavours may entirely conspire with his; and are ready to sacrifice any fleshly Interests of our own, when they stand in the least competition with the superior Interests of his Glory and service. We then love him, when with our Blessed Lord we *account it our meat to do his Will*, John 4. 34. and have our *hearts enlarg'd to run the way of his Commandments* (with all alacrity,) Ps. cxix.

Nay our *Love to God* includes our *delight in the Advancement of what he accounts his Interest and Glory*.

We then truly *love him*, when our *Wills* are regularly inclin'd to him as our *ultimate End*; When the Glorifying him and pleasing of his Will is in our practical Esteem most *amiable*: So
that

that we even delight in our *own* Happiness, chiefly as 'tis a *means* to this *higher End*. For indeed, as our *own* and *others* Felicity is but a *subordinate End* to the *honouring* and *pleasing* of God: So we must not chiefly love God, as that is the *means* to our Felicity, but value and delight in our Felicity, as 'tis a *means* subservient to his *Glory* and *Pleasure*. That is in it felt chiefly *Amiable*; and therefore shou'd be the *chief Object* of our Delight and Love. And indeed this is the noblest *pitch* and *height* of truly *Divine Love*, when we thus love God chiefly, *in* and *for himself*, making the manifestation of his *Glory*, and the fulfilling of his good *Pleasure*, the *chief Object* of our *Complacency* and *Satisfaction*.

Having explained the *Act* of loving God, I come to consider farther.

III. The *extent* and *measure* of the *Duty* here Enjoyn'd, viz. *To Love him with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Mind*.

I shall not be so curious as to go about to distinguish these three Expressions, and assign a different Sense to every one

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of

of 'em. 'Tis usual in Scripture to multiply Expressions of the same import for inculcating a thing with greater Vehemence. And in the Evangelist Mark, 'tis *with all the Understanding, Soul and Strength*, Mark 12. 33. Those Expressions may indeed refer to the three faculties of the Soul, it's *Understanding, Will and Executive Power*. And doubtless all of 'em must concur in this excellent Duty.

Some indeed have rais'd a Doubt, whether this Command of loving God with all our Heart, &c. enjoyn the *perfection* or only the *sincerity* of our Love to God? But I see no reason for doubting; but that,

On the one Hand, this Command does enjoyn *perfect Love* as our *unquestionable Duty*.

For the Law of God is a perfect rule of our Duty, suited to Man in his innocent State; and God has not lost his right to Command, because Man has sinfully lost his Disposition to Obey. The Law of God being the *Transcript* of his own *Purity*, must require the highest Degree of Love to God, that our reasonable Nature is capable of paying.

ing: For no less is due, and whatever falls short thereof, is *culpably imperfect*.

But on the other Hand, there is no doubt the *Command* (as mitigated by the indulgence of the Gospel Covenant) requires only *sincerity* of our *Love to God* as the *condition* of our *Acceptance* and *Reward*.

'Tis therefore the *Sincere*, not the *perfect Love of God* that is the Christians *Attainment* and *Character*: And in the Language of the Gospel, those *Love him thus with all their Heart, &c.* who *love him in Sincerity*. He that might in strict Justice exact the *perfection* of our Duty, is pleas'd to overlook our involuntary Weakness, and graciously to accept the Integrity of our devout Affections. And how admirable a Favour is this, that when our *perfect Love* is really an offering so much *below* his Notice; he disdains not our *unfeigned Love*, tho' attended with many sinful Defects?

I shall therefore chiefly consider these *Expressions* as they describe the *Sincerity* of our Love to God, and shew what they contain as *requisite* thereto.

But since the full prosecution of this Head wou'd carry me beyond my present bounds, I shall close this Discourse with the following Reflection on what has been said.

Is the *Loving the Lord, &c. the first and great Command?* Then,

I. We may hence *admire the infinite Condescension of the Blessed God.*

For what less than infinite *Condescension* cou'd move that glorious Majesty, who is his own infinite Happiness, and stands in no need of us; thus to court the Affections of poor despicable Worms, from whom he can expect no Advantage, nay, by whom he has been extreamly Injur'd and Dis-oblig'd? That so excellent a Being, rais'd infinitely *Above us*, by the perfections of his own Nature, and his sovereign Dominion over us, shou'd yet invite us to a *filial Love of him*, and make that happy temper of Soul, our principal and most important *Duty*. That he shou'd be willing to receive so mean an Offering as that of our *Love*, and put so great a value upon it! Especially when we consider, that the great thing he seeks in our *Love to him*, is the occasion of letting out upon us the fullest Emanations and Streams of
his

his beneficent Love, and thereby making us for ever Happy in the Enjoyment of himself ! And 'tis indeed the highest Advantage and Dignity of our reasonable Nature, that we are capable of beholding the attractive Glory of God, and of loving that infinitely amiable Being. So that this Command enjoyns us a Duty, which 'tis at once our *Honour* and our *Happiness* to be employ'd in.

II. We may hence inferr, that if *Love to God* be the *first* and *great Command*, then *Hatred* of him is the most *hainous Sin*.

'Tis one of the black Characters given of the generality of the degenerate Heathen World, that they were *Haters of God*, Rom. 1. 30. And God threatens to *visit the Iniquity of the Fathers on the Children, to the third and fourth Generation of them that hate him*, Exo. 20. 5. v.

And this *Enmity* against God is the most poysonous Ingredient in the most enormous acts of Disobedience and Wickedness. This is the Sin that chiefly renders *Devils* so odious and accursed Creatures, that they are pos-

self'd with so inveterate a malignity against the Blessed God ; that they hate his holy Nature and Government ; that were it possible they wou'd strike at his Being, and do at least wish for the Extinction of it. And tho' 'tis but a few, and those the worst of Men, that here arrive to so dreadful a Height of open Enmity against God, as Devils are acted with ; yet all Wicked Men have the same cursed Principle in 'em, and wou'd hate the Blessed God as much as any of those accursed Fiends, if they felt as much of his inexorable Justice, and did as entirely Despair of his Mercy as they do. For their carnal Mind is truly *Enmity against God himself*, thro' it's irreconcilable *Enmity to his holy Law* ; And our *Enmity against God* is in this more inexcusable than that of Devils, that we have no such Temptation to it as their hopeless Condition suggests to them. And, O what a horrid Sin is it, for us who are the *Work of his Hands*, to hate him in whom we live and Move, and have our Being ! For us who are his *Subjects*, to hate that infinitely Gracious God, who daily endeavours to overcome our Evil with his Good ;

Good ! who by *the Riches of his long-Suffering and Goodness*, daily leads us to *Repentance* ! and who by the marvellous discoveries and tenders of Infinite Love, strives to conquer our disaffected Hearts and melt 'em into ingenuous Love !

No deformity in our Bodies can be more monstrous than this Deformity in our Souls. What a dreadful Thing is it to turn away the Eye of our Minds from that *Father and Fountain of Light* that shines with so bright and attractive Lustre ! What a dismal Thing for a Sinner to come to that height of Malignity, as to hate the very Thoughts of God, and even wish the annihilation of his Being ! A wish infinitely more unreasonable and abominable, than for a Man to wish the Light of the *Sun* were Extinguish'd. For his Being and Perfections are infinitely more necessary to the well-Being of the intellectual World, than the Light of the Sun to this sensible World. In a Word, To hate the Blessed God is a Sin of the first Magnitude ; 'tis the most dreadful Instance of the deep depravation of our Nature ; 'tis the most hideous and detestable Lineament of the Devil's Image.

F I N I S,

Good: who by the riches of his long
suffering and goodness, easily leads us to
repentance: and who by the manifestations
discovered and tenders of Infinite Love,
thinks to convert our distant hearts
and melt our most stubborn loves.
No delinquency in our bodies can be
more monstrous than this delinquency in
our souls. What a capital sin is it
to turn away the eye of our mind from
that Father and Fountain of Light that
thinks with us in right and sensitive love
and to turn a capital sin for a sin
not to come to that height of Malice
as to hate the very thought of God
and even with the application of his
penalty. A still more heinous more un-
christian and more unchristian than for a Man
to witness light of the sun were Ex-
tinguished. For his being and love
shows are infinitely more necessary to the
well-being of the intellectual World
than the light of the sun to this Earth.
The World is a World to have the
blessed God as a sun of the Earth. Man
indeed is the most essential instance of
the dependence of our Nature, its
the most heinous and detestable sin.

ment of the Devil's image.
FINIS

On the Love of
G O D.



SERM. II.

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verf. 35, 36, 37, and 38.

35. Then one of 'em which was a Lawyer
askt him a Question, tempting him, and say-
ing,

36. Master, which is the great Command-
ment in the Law?

37. Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the
Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with
all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.

38. This is the first and great Command-
ment,

I Have already from these Words made some Progress in the prosecution of that important Subject which they contain, viz.

That to Love the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, is the first and great Command.

In speaking hereto, I have already consider'd.

First, The Command it self.

And here I both consider'd,

I. The Object of our Love, the Lord our God : And,

II. The several Acts that are included in our Love to him : And,

III. The Measure and Extent of our Love, viz. That we must Love him with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.

And having in the former Discourse premis'd, that tho' this Command dos enjoin the perfection of Divine Love as our unquestionable Duty ; yet as mitigated by the indulgence of the Gospel-Covenant, it requires only the sincerity of our Love, as the Condition of our Acceptance and Reward.

Serm. II. Of GOD. 285

I come now therefore to consider these Expressions as they describe the *Sincerity of Divine Love*.

Now in Order hereto.

1. 'Tis requisite, *that our Love to God be Superlative.*

It must incomparably exceed our Love to any other Being whatsoever; and our Affection to the *best of Creatures* must be entirely *Subordinate* to that we bear to the great *Author and Maker* of all.

I know indeed a late learned *Writer* confidently asserts, " That we must not
" love God and our Fellow Creatures
" with the *same kind* of Love at all;
" that we may indeed Love them with
" a Love of *Beneficence* and *Good-*
" *Will*, but must Love none but God
" with a Love of *Complacency* and *De-*
" *light*. And this *Affertion* he founds
upon a *Philosophical Speculation*,
viz. " That God alone is the *immediate*
" *Author* of all our *pleasing Sensations*,
" and therefore shou'd be the *only Object*
" of our *Delight*. But as this *Specula-*
tion it self is at least but *Uncertain* and
Dubious (for we who know so little
of

of the *Frame* and *Constitution* of our own *Bodies* and *Souls*, can hardly be able to Determine whether *External Objects* may not have some *instrumental Efficacy* in producing in us such *pleasing sensations* as we actually experience in our selves) so I see no foundation that this *Inference* from it has in the Holy Scriptures. Nay their Language seems no way *consistent* with this *Opinion*. The Scriptures seem every where to allow us a *moderated Delight* in all our present Enjoyments: They permit us to *rejoyce* in that *Portion* of *temporal Good*, which is the *fruit* of our *Labour* and of the *Divine Blessing*, Eccl. v. 18, 19. ix. 7, 8, 9. They allow us to *rejoyce* in our desirable *Relations* and *Friends*, tho' it must be in a degree so comparatively *low as if we rejoiced not*, 1 Cor. 7. 30. They condemn not all the *pleasure* we relish in sensible Good, but only our being *Lovers of pleasure more than Lovers of God*; [*φιλοῦντες ἡδονὴν ᾤ φιλοῦντες*] 2 Tim. 3. 4. Nay they recommend to us the genuine use of such inferior *Objects* of our *Delight*, viz That the sweetness of these *streams* shou'd lead up our Affections to God as the *Fountain* of all Good: That these

these good *Gifts* shou'd endear that *Father of Lights* from whom they come; And that the *pleasure* we taste in *them* shou'd raise our Souls to higher *Delight* in *Him* the Supreme and All-satisfying Object of our Happiness.

What then this *Command* enjoyns as to the *Measure* of *Divine Love*, is, That the Great God have the *Sovereignty* in our *Affections*; That He be *Inthron'd* in our *Hearts*; That no *created Object* whatever be admitted to stand as a *Rival* with him for our *Esteem*, our *Desire* and *Delight*: That no Creature be allow'd to have any other than a *subordinate Place* in our *Affections*; That all the satisfaction we relish in any finite Good be *subservient* to excite our more ardent Desires towards him, and to raise us to the expectation of full and consummate felicity in the Injoyment of him. And indeed it were the greatest Affront we cou'd offer to him to give the best of Creatures the *preference* be him. This he justly brands as an *hainous Crime*, as a *forsaking him the Fountain of Living Waters*, to seek our *Satisfaction in broken Cisterns that can hold no Water*, Jer. 2. 13. He challenges the

the *Empire* in our Hearts; 'tis his positive Demand. *My Son give me thy Heart.* Prov. 23. 26. He does not reckon himself (in an Acceptable manner) *Lov'd at all*, where he is not *lov'd above all*. Even *Father and Mother, Brethren and Sisters, Wife, Houses, Lands* (and whatever is *amiable* and *dear* to us here below) must in our Affections be so far *Post-pon'd* to him, as to be *Hated* in comparison of Him, Mat. 10. 27. Luke. 14. 26. Every Object must be *Abhor'd* and *Renounc'd* that wou'd pretend to stand in *Competition* with him. He must be to our Souls their only *sovereign Good*, their satisfying *Portion*, the only *Centre* of their *everlasting Rest*. Tho' he does not *Monopolize* our Love, yet he does Claim a peculiar *unrival'd Degree* of it.

But,

2. 'Tis requisite to this *sincerity* of our Love to God, that we shou'd still *aspire to Higher Degrees* of it, and *strive against the culpable Defects* of it.

We must *Love him with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind*; and therefore *breath after, and be tending towards the height*

Serm. I: of G O D. 289

height and perfection of Divine Love.

We must *so love him*, as never to think we do *love Him enough*; and must therefore never sit down satisfied with those *imperfect Degrees* of Divine Love that we have attained. He does not love God as he *ought*, who imagines that he loves him *as well* as he *Deserves*; who does not sensibly own and lament the *Failures* and *Languor* of his devout Affections, and in whom that Divine Flame is not *Ascending* higher and higher. For our Love to God shou'd, like the glorious *Object* of it, have *no bounds* set to it. The *only Measure* in our Love to him, is to *love him without Measure*. Our *Understandings* shou'd aspire to more admiring adoring Thoughts of him; our *Wills* shou'd be carried towards him with a stronger Bent and Propension; we shou'd tend towards him with insatiable *Desires*; we shou'd endeavour to relish more of satisfying *Delight* in him, and long for that State, where the clearest Discoveries, and fullest Communications of the Love of God shall excite and enable us to *Love him*, according to the *utmost* of our finite Capacity.

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Having thus consider'd the *Command* it self, I now proceed,

Secondly, To shew, on what account our Saviour declares this *Command* of loving the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, &c. to be the *First and Great Command*.

I. Let us consider, on what Account 'tis call'd the *first Command*.

Now 'tis justly call'd the *first Command*.

I. As 'tis the *first* in Order and Dignity,

It belongs to the *first Table* of the *Law* (being a comprehensive Summary of it, as I shall shew more fully anon;) And 'tis every way congruous, that that sacred Rule of Righteousness shou'd first enjoyn and regulate our Love to God, as the *best of Beings*; to whom our Obligations are infinitely Greater than to all the *World*; and who is the *Source* and *Spring* of all those *Perfections* that can entitle any Being to our *rational Love*. Nay among the *Duties* of the *first Table*, this justly Challenges the *first Rank* and *Place*. For when once our Minds entertain any suitable Apprehensions of his amiable *Excellencies*, and his endear-
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ring *Relation* to us, as the *Author* of our *Beings*, and the *Fountain* of all our *Mercies*. The *first Tribute* that the *Contemplation* thereof calls us to *Pay* is that of our affectionate *Veneration* and *Gratitude*. His attractive *Glories* challenge the *one*; his admirable and undeserved *Benefits* give him a just *Claim* to the *other Act* of *Love*. The *first Sacrifice* such a reasonable Creature shou'd pay to its glorious *Maker* and *Benefactor* is to *offer up* it self to him in the *Flames* of *Love*, and make him a tender of his *Heart*. Our *Superlative Love* (how mean a thing soever it may be in it self, yet) is the *best* and *greatest* *Present* we can make, and therefore shou'd be first tendred to the *best* and *greatest* of *Beings*.

Nay,

2. This is justly call'd the *first Command* in respect of its *causal Influence*, viz. Because our *love to God* is the *principle* of all *regular Love* to any *other Being*.

We must prefer the *Cause* before the *Effect*. Our *Fellow-Creatures* are no farther *Amiable*, than as they bear some

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likeness and resemblance to him. And we must Love 'em for that Natural or Moral Image of his that is enstamp'd upon 'em. We must love 'em as they are his Creatures or his Children. If we Love 'em on the account of the intellectual Powers they are endued with; 'tis because they bear some Resemblance to him, as he is the Father of Spirits. If we love 'em on the account of their Graces and Vertues, these are the Lineaments of his Image; these are that Divine or God-like Nature which his regenerating Grace has implanted in 'em. Their Excellencies being all borrow'd and deriv'd from him, they can pretend to no more than a secondary Place in our Love: They are only so far amiable as they shine with the Rays he darts upon 'em. And we must first Love him that begat, before we can Love those that are begotten of him. We must therefore first love him Above all, that we may know how to proportion our Love to all other Objects. For all other Beings must be Lov'd for his Sake; And our Love of them must both be (as was observ'd before) Subordinate and Subservient to our love of Him.

But,

But,

II. Let us farther consider, *Why 'tis* call'd the *Great* (or as we may justly render it the *Greatest*) *Command*.

Now 'tis deservedly call'd by way of *Eminency* the *Great Command*.

1. In respect of it's *comprehensive Extent*, as it virtually includes all other *Acts of Piety* towards God.

As the Apostle justly observes, concerning the *Duties* of the *second Table*, that they are fulfilled with this, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*. Rom. 13. 9. I may say the same concerning the *Duties* of the *first*, that they are some way comprehended in this of *Loving the Lord our God, with all our Heart, &c.*

Our Love naturally vents it self in our *admiring adoring Thoughts* of him. Do we *Pray* to him? 'Tis our Love that enlarges our Hearts in ardent *Desires* towards him, and prompts us to a filial *Affiance and Trust* in him. Do we *Praise* him? 'Tis our Love that inspires us with such a high *Veneration* of his amiable Excellencies, and with such a *grateful sense* of our Obligation to him for his

numberless undeserved Benefits. Do we *hear his Word*? 'Tis our Love to him that moulds our Hearts into an *Obediential* Frame, and prompts us to a ready compliance with his pleasure and Will. Do we *Act* for the Advancement of his Kingdom and Interest? 'Tis Love that inflames our Hearts with such an *active Zeal* for his Glory. Our *filial Fear* of him springs from our ingenuous *Affection* to him, and is the genuine *Effect* and *Fruit* thereof. And well may *Divine Love* be reckon'd the *principal Duty* of the *first Table* when it thus runs thro', and animates all the rest, and is as it were the *Life* and *Soul* of 'em.

2. 'Tis call'd *the Great Command* in respect of the *Value* which the Blessed God puts upon it.

He lays so great a *stress* thereon that he *estimates* all other *Duties* by the *Devout Affection* from which they *spring*: And all other *Duties* without this are as *unacceptable* to him, as it wou'd have been under the Mosaick Law, to offer a *dead Carcass* instead of a *Living Sacrifice*. Our most regular *Supplications* and *Petitions* without those holy *Desires* towards

towards God, which Divine Love inspires, wou'd be in his account no better than the *shell of Devotion* without the *Substance*. And shou'd we celebrate his *Praises* in the most elegant and lofty *Strains*, if they were not tun'd by Love; we shou'd be to him but as the *sounding Brass, and tinkling Cymbal*, 1 Cor. 13. 1. Nay the Apostle adds there a strange *Supposition*, of a Man's *bestowing all his Goods on the Poor*, and *giving his Body to be Burnt*; and yet *without Charity or Divine Love*, *this wou'd profit him nothing*, v. 3. No *liberality to Men* will be *Acceptable*, that springs not from the *love of God*; and a Man's *giving his Body to be burnt*, will not denominate him a true *Martyr* in God's account, if he do not *offer up his Soul too in the Flames of Love*. The most comprehensive *Knowledge of Divine Mysteries* is so far *valuable* as it serves to *inflame our Devout Affections* towards the *Blessed God*; and *Faith* it self is so far *acceptable* as it *works by Love*, Gal. 5. 6. Love is the *End* which *Faith* and *Hope* are but the *Means* to promote. And no *external Acts of Obedience* can recommend us to God, that are not *animated by this Divine*

Principle. No *spiritual Oblations* and *Sacrifices* can be pleasing to him, that are not *offer'd* on the *Altar* of a *Devout Heart*, and kindled by this *fire from Above*. Whereas the *meanest Offering* we can bring (when suitable to our real *Ability*) will be graciously *receiv'd*, when presented with the sincere *Affection* of the *Offerer*. As we see in the favourable *Acceptance* that the poor *Widow's Mite* met with.

Once more.

3. This is justly call'd the *great Command* on the account of its *powerful Influence on the whole Course of our Obedience*.

'Tis true indeed, that our *Hope* and *Fear* are very potent springs of our *Actions*, and derive a mighty force from those *Promises* and *Threatnings* of God, which are the *Sanction* of his Law, and set before us the strongest *Motives* to *Obedience*. But yet their *Influence* is not comparable to that of *Divine Love*. 'Tis chiefly *Divine Love* that renders the service of God our *deliberate Choice*, and our *highest Delight*; 'tis this ingenuous and generous *Principle* that enlarges our
Hearts

Hearts to run the way of his Commands with the greatest Alacrity. To a Soul animated by Divine Love, the *Commands of God* are no more grievous, 1 John 5, 3. *His Yoke is Easy, and his Burden is Light*, Mat. 12. 30. Love makes us esteem his *Service* our truest *Freedom*. It dos by a sweet but sovereign Efficacy, *constrain* us to our Duty. It inspires us with a laudable *Ambition* and *Zeal* to approve our selves to the Eye of God. It renders the *Difficulties* and *Hardships* of our Obedience easily *Superable*, and carries us on it with continued Pleasure; enabling us even to rejoyce in Tribulations, and to count it matter of our *Honour* and *Joy* when our *Zeal* and *Fidelity* is tried by any *Sufferings* in the cause of God. In a word, the Progress we make in our Obedience will always bear a Proportion to the *Strength* and *Vigour* of this gracious Principle, from which it chiefly Springs. And well may this be call'd the *great Command*, when this *Divine Love* is the Principle that most powerfully prompts us to the Observance of all the rest.

I now come to the *practical Improvement* of this important Subject.

And,

I. *We may here admire the infinite Condescension of God, in making so excellent a Duty as this, the matter of his first and great Command.*

II. *We may hence infer, That if to love the Lord, &c. be the first and great Command; then Hatred of him is the most hainous Sin.*

To these two *Heads* I have spoken in the former Discourse; I now proceed.

III. *If to love the Lord our God, &c. be the first and great Command, then this shou'd put all of us upon the most serious Enquiry, whether we sincerely comply with it.*

If this be the *chief* and most *comprehensive Branch* of the *Law of God*, it highly concerns us to see that it be *written on the fleshy Tables of our Hearts*. And therefore 'tis a matter of vast Importance to manage this *Enquiry* aright. We can with no certainty conclude our own *Interest* in the peculiar *favour* and *love of God*, without discerning the *sincerity* of our love to him. Here therefore

fore we have the greatest occasion for deep and impartial *Reflections* upon our predominant Temper and Frame towards God. To *assist* and *direct* you in this *Enquiry*, let me urge you to propose such *Questions* as these to your own Consciences.

Is my love to God transcendant and superlative?

Do I love him *Above all*? Can I truly say with the devout Psalmist, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon Earth that I can desire besides Thee?* Ps. 73. 25. Do I esteem his *Loving-kindness* as *better than Life*? Ps. 63. 3. Do I relish more Satisfaction in the sense of his Favour, than in the affluence of all temporal Injoyments? Is the *Light of his Countenance* more reviving to me, than the *Increase of Corn and Wine*? Ps. 4. 7, 8. Will no temporal Blessings yield me any true Contentment without the sense of his peculiar Love? Can I *rejoyce in that*, even when all outward Comforts seem to fail? Heb. 3. 27. Dos all the sweetness I taste in created Injoyments lead up my Affections to God, and dispose my Soul for higher Delight in him as the only *Fountain of*

of all Good? Do I not suffer the *World* to stand as a *competitor* with God for my *Heart*? Dos nothing here below *rival* him as the Object of my highest Satisfaction? These are comfortable Evidences that thy Love to God is Sincere.

Again,

Do I lament the Imperfection and Defects of my love to God? Dos nothing shame and grieve me so much as that I can love that infinitely amiable Being *no more*? Am I aspiring to higher Degrees of ardent Affection to him? Do I endeavour by frequent Meditation to *blow up* this spark of Divine Love into a *brigh-ter Flame*? Or on the contrary, Do I put off the Blessed God with a transient glance of my Eye, and with a sudden *flash* of devout Affection that is no sooner kindled, but it *Expires* and *Dies*?

Again; Enquire,

What do I daily feel of the genuine motions of Divine Love? especially in my Religious Transactions with God? Do I often Meditate upon him? Do I gladly embrace all opportunities of *Conversing with him*? Do I relish the most satisfying Delight

Serm. II. Of GOD. 301

Delight in drawing nigh to him? Do I earnestly desire to know, to obey, to resemble and to enjoy him more? Do I breathe after more of the sanctifying Influences of his Grace to inflame my Affections towards him, and after the Discoveries of his pardoning Mercy, and assurances of his special Love? Do I value an Interest in him above all the World? and aspire to the full fruition of him as my only *satisfying Felicity*? When such gracious *Emotions* as these towards God, are as it were the *daily pulse* of our Souls, 'tis an evidence that our *love* to him is *Sincere*: Whereas we have just reason to question all our pretensions to it, when we are in a great Measure strangers to such pleasing admiring Thoughts of God, such warm Desires towards him, such breathings after Delightful Communion with him; such an high valuation of our Interest in him, &c.

Again; Enquire,

What genuine Effects does Divine Love produce? Does it powerfully prompt me to keep his Commands? Does it render me

me above all things solicitous to approve my self to his All-seeing Eye? Dos it possess me with an holy care to Please, and a filial dread to Offend him? Dos it carry me with alacrity in a steady course of Obedience, and turn my *Work* and *Duty* into *Pleasure* and *Delight*? Dos it inspire me with an active Zeal for the Glory and Service of my Blessed Lord? Dos it enable me to *Post-pone*, nay freely to *Sacrifice* my fleshly Ease or Worldly Interest, whenever it comes in competition with his superior Interest? Dos my Love to him *controul* and *regulate* my Affection to all *inferior Objects*? These are comfortable Evidences of the Sincerity of it. But we have just reason to suspect all our pretensions to *Divine Love*, when 'tis destitute of these genuine *Fruits*. For that is the most unerring Character of sincere Love to God, which the inspir'd Apostle delivers; *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments,* 1 John, 5. 3.

Once more,

Is the Love I pretend to God the powerful Principle of fervent Affection to all those that bear his Image? Dos it endear
all

all those on whom I see this amiable Stamp of his imitable Perfections? Dos my Love to him that Begat, prompt me to love those that are Begotten of him? Are his Saints in my esteem the Excellent ones of the Earth, in whom is my Delight? Pl. 16. 2. And we are the more concern'd to try ourselves by this Character, because the Scriptures lay so particular a stress upon it. *If a Man say, I love God, and hates his Brother, he is a Liar. For he that loves not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* 1 John, 4. 20. q. d. If we love not that imperfect Copy of the imitable Excellencies of God that appears to our view in his Children, How can we pretend to Love the invisible Original?

By such Characters as these, we may judge of the Sincerity of our love to God. And O how highly are we concern'd to accomplish a diligent Search, that we may be upon good grounds enabled to appeal to the Heart-searching God, concerning the sincerity of our devout Affection in the Language of Peter to our Blessed Saviour, *Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love Thee,* John 21. 17. Now

Now since all Mankind are divided into these two opposite Ranks, *those that sincerely love God, and those that Love him not*; I shall accordingly

IVly, *Address myself to those of you, who upon impartial Enquiry, have just reason to conclude, That you are devoid of that sincere and Superlative Love to God which is requir'd by this first and great Command.*

And sure it shou'd startle and awaken your Consciences to think that you are chargeable with such hainous Guilt as this. If those be inexcusable that wilfully *break the least of God's Commands*, How much more inexcusable are you, that *violate the first and greatest of all*? It was a severe Censure that our Blessed Saviour pass'd on the Unbelieving Jews, when he said, *I know you that ye have not the Love of God in you*, John, 5. 42. And it shou'd make you tremble to consider, that this *black Character* belongs to you.

And that I may fasten this just Reproof on your Consciences, I wou'd,

First, *Expostulate the matter with you, that I may if possible, convince you both of your Guilt and Danger, while you are*
under

under such a *cursed Dis-affection to the Blessed God* ! And to that end I beseech you to consider these two Things.

I. *The Unreasonableness and Ingratitude of this wretched Temper.*

What is there in that infinitely Great and Glorious Being, that we shou'd be possess'd with such an unaccountable *Aversion* to him ? If exquisite *Beauty* can *Attract*, if matchless *Excellencies* can *Allure* and *Draw* ; if boundless *Goodness* and *Benignity* can *win* and *gain* upon our Hearts, what shou'd hinder us from *loving Him* ? What an *Absurd*, what an *amazing* height of *Folly* and *Perverseness* is it not to *Love* him, who is infinite *Love* it self, and delights in the most diffusive Communication thereof to all the Works of his Hands ? How *irregular* and *distemper'd* must that *Eye* be that does not *love* the *Light* ? And how deeply must that *Soul* be *deprav'd* and *debas'd* that bears no *affection* to the *best* of all *Beings* ? I may say to you in God's behalf as our *Blessed Saviour* said to the *Jews*, *Many good Works have I done, for which of those do ye stone me* ? John 10. 32. So may I say, You are surrounded with innumerable

able *Benefits* as the *Effects* of the undeserved *Love* of God; For which of these are your Minds so deeply prejudic'd against him, and disaffected to him? Do you daily tread on his *Earth* and *breath* in his *Air*; are you fed with his *Corn* and cloath'd with his *Wool*; are you from Day to Day protected by his *Power* and maintain'd by his *Bounty*, and enrich'd with the fruits of his *Goodness*: And is there no *Tribute* of *Superlative Affection* due to so Gracious a *Benefactor*, for all the valuable Gifts that you receive from his *unoblig'd* Hand? Can no *Demonstrations* of his marvelous *Kindness* affect your Hearts? No *Cords* and *Bands* of his *Love* draw you to himself? O the amazing *Stupidity* and *Ingratitude* of Sinners that cherish and harbour such an *unnatural Enmity* to the *Author* of their *Beings*, and the *Fountain* of all their *Mercies*! How well may the Blessed God call on the *Heavens* to hear, and the *Earth* to give ear to his just *Complaint* against such unthankful Creatures, and upbraid 'em with the carriage of the *Ox* and the *Ass*, who (tho' the most stupid Animals, yet) discover far more of *Ingenuity* and *Gratitude*

itude to their Masters for their Kindness and Care than Man do's to God.
See *Is.* 1. 2, 3.

But,

2. Consider farther the *pernicious tendency of this your wretched Temper towards God.*

The infinitely Wise God has so fram'd the Soul of Man, that it can never be truly *Happy* but *in himself*. All our very *temporal Blessings* entirely depend on his continued *Favour* and *Bounty*; and our *Souls* have those vast and enlarged *Capacities*, that God alone can *Satisfy*. Our endless Blessedness in a future State must spring from the immediate *Vision* and *Enjoyment* of himself. Now 'tis impossible for us to be *Happy* in the B. God, without a *Sincere* and *Superlative Love* to him. A Soul that retains a predominant *Disaffection* to God, can never be the Object of his *Complacency* and *Delight*. Nay such a *Disaffected* Soul can never relish any *pleasure* in the *Presence* and *Communion* of that God whom it dos not *Love*. It dos already affect an *Estrangement* and *Distance* from God, and can expect no other

ther doom, than an *endless* separation from him. Nay, where the blessed God is not superlatively Lov'd, he is in effect *Hated*. And as that *Hatred* is daily *heightned* and *sublimated* by every Act of *Hostility* and *Disobedience* we commit, by all the new guilt we contract, and the additional degrees of Vengeance that we expose our selves to ; so it renders us more like to *Devils* in *Malignity*, and prepares us to become *sharers* with 'em in their *Misery* and *Torment*, as we are in their *Guilt* and *Wickedness*. To be an *hater* of God, is a black *Brand* and *Character* of those that are *Children of Wrath*, and *Heirs of Hell*; so that in not loving God, we do not truly love our selves. By continuing *Enemies* to Him, we are the worst *Enemies* to our own *Souls*. In *fleeing* from Him, we in effect *flee* from our own *Happiness*. And as our base *Disaffection* to him is the most *hainous* *Guilt* ; so it is the true *spring* of our *endless* *Misery*.

Supposing you then to be sensible of the *Unreasonableness* and *Ingratitude*, and the *pernicious tendency* of this wretched *Temper*, I shou'd in the

Second Place, offer a few *Directions* in order to the *Cure* of this your *unnatural Disaffection* to the Blessed God.

But that with the remaining Part of the *Application*, I shall leave to the next *Discourse*.

FINIS.

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On the Love of
G O D.

SERM. III.

MATT. Chap. XXII.
Vers. 35, 36, 37, and 38.

35. *Then one of 'em which was a Lawyer
askt him a Question, temptring him, and say-
ing,*

36. *Master, which is the great Command-
ment in the Law?*

37. *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the
Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with
all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.*

38. *This is the first and great Command-
ment.*

I Have already from these Words made
some Progress in the prosecution of
this Subject, viz.

*That to love the Lord our God, with
all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, is
the first and great Command.*

Intreating whereon, I have already,

I. Consider'd the Command it self.

And,

II. I shew'd, *On what accounts 'tis
call'd the first and great Command.*

I then came to the Application of this
Subject. And,

I. Hence we may infer the *admirable
condescension of God, in proposing
himself as the Object of our Love.*

II. If loving God, &c. be the *first
and great Command, then hatred of
him is the most heinous and horrid
Sin.*

III. Hence I urg'd you to *Enquire,
whether you comply with this first and
great Commandment?*

And here several Characters were
propos'd, by which we may judge of
the *sincerity of our Love to God.*

IV. Hence

IV. Hence I propos'd to *Address* my self, both to those that are destitute of the Love of God, and to those in whose Hearts it is Implanted.

First, I wou'd hence *Address* my self to those that are devoid of the sincere Love of God.

And,

I. I propos'd to Expostulate with such about their wretched Temper. To that purpose I urg'd 'em to consider,

1. The *Unreasonableness* and the *perverse Ingratitude* of it.

2. The *pernicious tendency* of it. Nothing can be more inconsistent with our Happiness than a cursed Dis-affection to him : So that not to Love him is in effect to hate our selves, and flee from our own Felicity by fleeing from him the only Fountain of it.

Accordingly either the Bent of our Hearts towards God must be chang'd, or you must renounce all Expectations of Eternal Blessedness in Him. And will you choose rather to be extremely Miserable in an endless *Separation* from God, than by loving Him, to become Happy in his *Presence* and Love for ever?

I shall therefore, supposing you to be sensible of the *unreasonableness* and *pernicious tendency* of this wretched Temper.

II. Offer a few *Directions* in order to the *Cure* of it.

If then you are convinc'd that to love the Lord your God with all your Heart and Soul, &c. is your *unquestionable Duty*, and your *apparent Interest*; If you are *asham'd* of and truly lament the wretched *disinclination* of your Hearts towards him; If you really desire that that unreasonable *Disaffection* may be conquer'd, and the prevalent *Love* of God kindled in your Souls, Then in order thereto be willing to take some pains with your own Hearts in Compliance with the following Advices.

1. See that the main ground of the *Enmity* and *Disaffection* be remov'd by a *mutual Reconciliation*.

For if we enquire into the secret *spring* of that *Enmity* and *Disaffection*, we shall find it arises from hence: Sinners are obstinately in love with their Lusts, and cannot bear the strict restraint of the Laws of God. And being on the other hand Apprehensive, that a holy and righteous God will call 'em to

an Account for and severely avenge the violation of his Holy Laws; Hence they Entertain such a secret Disaffection to him as a *Malefactor* has to a strict *Magistrate* or just *Judge*. They cannot be reconcil'd to the Purity and Righteousness of his Nature and Government, and their Apprehensions thereof prompt 'em to flee from him as their *Enemy* and *Avenger*. And this is the Account the Scripture gives of their *Aversion from God*. Their *carnal Mind is Enmity against God*, because it is not subject to his Law, Rom. 8. 7.

They are *Alienated and Enemies to Him in their Minds by wicked Works*, Col. 1. 21. So that while they obstinately adhere to their Sins, their Hearts must needs be dis-inclin'd to and prejudic'd against that Blessed Majesty, who (they know) abhors their Iniquities, and has threatn'd most severely to punish 'em. Hence they are so studious to banish the very Thoughts of him as uneasy and terrible to their Minds: And when any awful Judgment do's irresistibly force those Thoughts upon 'em, their affrighted Consciences are ready to say as *Ahab* to the *Prophet*; *Hast thou found me, O mine*

mine Enemy ! 1 Kings 21. 10. Hence it is that they come to apprehend if their Interest there shou'd be *no God*, or at least no such Holy and Sin-avenging God as the Scriptures represent him to be; and are therefore strongly tempted to *wish* there were none; and gladly wou'd they (if possible) rase the sense of his Being out of their Minds.

Now if ever we wou'd have the love of God reimplanted in our Souls, this mainground of Enmity must be *remov'd* And that must be by a *mutual Reconciliation* : In order whereto, there must be *serious Repentance on our part*, and *merciful Pardon on God's part*.

If ever therefore we wou'd have the love of God *restor'd* in our Souls, we must renounce those Sins that are the cause of the Enmity; and we must earnestly implore the Forgiveness and Favour of a reconciled God.

We must renounce those Sins that are the chief cause of the Enmity.

For 'tis by our *Sins* that we chiefly vent our Enmity against God; and 'tis those provoke him to become *our Enemy*, and tempt us to regard him as *such*. 'Tis not therefore possible to restore any
mutual

mutual Friendship and Love, unless either the B. God change his holy and righteous Nature and Government; or there be a change in our Temper and Frame. The *former* is absolutely *Impossible* as well as most *Unreasonable*; the *latter* is most *Reasonable*, and by Divine Grace very *Possible*; nay *easy* to be Effected. O then let us importunately beg the renewing Grace of God to conquer the Enmity of our Hearts against his Holy Laws, that so the Ground of our Dis-affection to his holy Nature may cease. And let us second our Prayers with serious Endeavours. Let us deeply consider the *Unreasonableness* and *Folly*, the *Odiousness* and *Deformity*, the *Evil* and poysonous *Malignity* of those Sins that we have so long cherish'd, till we find the bent of our Hearts turn'd against 'em, and our Souls form'd to a just Abhorrence of 'em. Let us contemplate the *Reasonableness* and *Equity*, the *Purity* and *Justice*, nay the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of the Laws of God, that restrain us from nothing but what is *Vile* and *Pernicious*; that only enjoyn whatever tends to *ennoble* and *perfect* our own Nature, and are admirably calcula-

la.

lated to promote both the *Welfare* and *Peace* of *publick Societies*, and the *present* and *future Happiness* of particular Persons. Let us prosecute such Meditations on the Excellency of the Law of God, till we are deeply convinc'd that our Obedience to it is as truly our highest Interest as 'tis our indispensable Duty, and till accordingly we find our Hearts reconcil'd to the purity and strictness of its Commands, and our Enmity against it turn'd into a predominant Love of it.

And to remove that farther ground of Enmity that our guilty fears suggest,

We must implore the Divine Forgiveness and Favour.

We must not conceive of God as an *implacable Enemy* or *inexorable Judge*; but as a most Gracious Sovereign, nay as a most Compassionate *Father*. We must consider him as the Gospel represents him as *a God in Christ, reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases to'em.* We must behold him as a most indulgent *Parent*, whose Bowels yearn over even his *Prodigal Son*, and whose Arms of Mercy are extended to embrace him upon his penitent Return;
who

who is ready instead of upbraiding him with his past Folly, to give him the most welcome Entertainment, and to receive him even with a transport of Joy and Satisfaction. And, O how irresistibly shou'd such a Representation of an infinite merciful God *attract* and *melt* the Heart of a convinced Sinner that is conscious of all his perverse Carriage towards him! Sure Sinner, when thou dost seriously consider, that that sovereign Majesty whose Anger thou hast provok'd by innumerable Offences, who has so many Advantages given him to glorify his Justice in thy deserved Ruin, has been so far from executing his threatened Vengeance upon thee, that he has from Day to Day, from Year to Year *waited to be Gracious to thee*; and has *by the Riches of his Goodness and Long-suffering, led thee to Repentance*; when thou considerest that he has sent his *own Son* to procure thy Pardon at the Expence of his own Blood; and that he freely offers it upon thy ingenuous Return to him; nay by a marvellous Condescension *beseeches* thee from time to time to accept it (as if it were his Interest more than thine.) Sure such an amazing
Dis-

Discovery of his unparalleled Clemency and Grace, of his infinitely tender Pity and Compassion to a most Undeserving and Unthankful Wretch, must needs make thee blush at thy own unreasonable Aversion from him ; and powerfully kindle some warmth of grateful Affection towards him in thy Heart. Sure such matchless Love will *win* and *allure* thy Dis-affected Soul, and thou wilt no longer be able to *withstand* the admirable attractive *Force* of it : Where is thy ingenuity, if the yearning Bowels of a provok'd, but now reconcilable Father will not awaken the tenderness of filial Affection in thy Heart ! If his matchless Love will not dissolve it into the kindly Exercises of ingenuous reciprocal Love ! O then earnestly sue for Reconciliation and Peace with him ; Say to him in the Language of the relenting *Prodigal*, *Father I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son, make me as one of thy hired Servants*, Luke 15. 18, 19. Deprecate his deserved Severity and Vengeance ; implore his restor'd Amity and Favour ; and in an humble reliance on his gracious

Serm. III: of GOD 321

ous Promise, cast thy self on his infinite Mercy thro' the Blood of a Redeemer, for Pardon and Acceptance.

And when thou canst thus by *Faith* look up to him as a *reconciled God*, thy *Affections* will easily *Ascend* to him. His infinite Love will be a most effectual *Incentive* to thine. The thoughts of a propitious God will be no longer *Unwelcome* and *Terrifying*, but on the contrary *sweet* and *delightful*. Then thou wilt with Freedom and Pleasure draw nigh to him as a *reconciled Father*, from whom before thou wast inclin'd to flee as from an *avenging Enemy*. The sense and persuasion, nay the believing Hopes of pardoning Mercy, will overcome all thy unreasonable Aversion, and make such deep Impressions of gratitude on thy Heart, that thou wilt with that ingenuous Penitent, *Love much, because much is forgiven thee*, Luke 7. 47.

2. Earnestly implore the Spirit of Adoption to form in thy Heart this filial Affection to thy Heavenly Father.

Divine Love is one of his excellent Fruits, Gal. 5. 22. 'Tis the brightest Lineament in that Image of God, which
his

his regenerating Vertue reinstamps upon our Souls. 'Tis the most considerable *Ingredient* in that *Divine* or *God-like Nature* that he makes us in our New-birth *Partakers* of. We must therefore beg that *Spirit of Adoption* that will enable us to cry *Abba Father*. We must pray that he whose *Operations* are resembled unto *Fire*, (*Match. 3. 11.*) wou'd enkindle in our Hearts this *Divine* and *Heavenly Spark*. 'Tis his *Grace* that alone can overcome the perverse *Dis-inclination* of our Hearts, and give 'em a new bent and byass towards God as the only *Centre* of our satisfying *Delight* and *Rest*.

3. *Let us cast out whatever is inconsistent with the predominant Love of God.*

I have already suggested, That the *Love* of all *impure Lusts* must be mortify'd: For that is the chief ground of our *Enmity* against God. The *love* of this *World* and the things in it, (i. e. of the *Lust of the Flesh*, the *Lust of the Eye*, and of the *pride of Life*.) must be abandon'd. For it if we love these, the *Love of the Father* is not in us, *1 John 2. 15.* The *friendship of this World*, (i. e. that friendship that is founded on our Com-

ply-

pliance with their corrupt principles and practices) is Enmity against God, James 4. 4.

We must also abandon all inordinate Love of this present World.

For the Great God will admit of no competitor for our Hearts, and much less of so vile and sordid a Rival as Mammon is, Matth. 6. 24. For the predominant Love of God must so entirely possess the Sovereignty and Throne in our Hearts as to bring all lower Affections under its Control, and subject all lower Interests to the Superior Interest of his Glory. If therefore we would have the Love of God reign in our Hearts, this World must be dethron'd, and our immoderate Affection to it crucify'd. None of its alluring Pleasures and Delights; none of its glittering Honours and Pomp; none of its tempting Advantages and Interests, must be regarded as any way comparable with the Favour of God. So that we must be ready in the Inclination and purpose of our Hearts, to renounce all of 'em rather than foregoe our Interest in him, and our Expectations from him. We must be in a great measure dead to the relish of all sensual Joys,

if we wou'd fix our Hearts on God as the Centre of our *Happiness* and *Rest* : All other *Affections* must be entirely subordinate to this Divine and heavenly one,

Nay, All inordinate self-Love must be mortify'd.

All that irregular carnal self-Love must be renounc'd that makes us prefer our own fleshly *Ease* or *Pleasure* or *Interest* before the *Interest* and *Glory* of God. We must not only hate *Father* and *Mother*, &c. but even our own *Life* it self (Luke 14. 26.) whenever Divine Love prompts us to foregoe it for his sake. Nay, even all that self-Love must be renounc'd that wou'd make us set up our own *Happiness* above the *Glory* of God, and hinder our referring even that to his *Glory* as our ultimate End.

What other *Directions* might be added to these will as fitly occur among those I shall propose to such as do sincerely love God. And therefore,

Secondly, I wou'd hence address my self to those in whose Hearts the Love of God is implanted.

Is this the First and great Command, To love the Lord our God? and must he be lov'd with all our Heart and Soul and Mind?

Mind? Then I wou'd hence suggest something by way of just *Reproof*, and something by way of *Exhortation* and *Advice*.

I. I wou'd hence *reprove* those wo-ful *defects* and *decays* of *Divine Love*, which the most of us are justly charge-able with.

Alas, how far short do we fall of the perfection of *Divine Love* which this *Command* requires! Nay, how weak and comparatively *Languid* are the *Degrees* of it! This *Heavenly Affection* in us, is rather like an *obscure* and fee-ble *Spark*, than a bright and active *Flame*. How little are our *Minds* taken up in daily adoring admiring *Thoughts* of *God*? How little are they ravish'd in the *Contemplation* of his most ami-able and attractive *Excellencies*! How seldom do we thankfully recount his numberless and admirable *Benefits*, and how little are our *Hearts* inflam'd with *Affectionate Gratitude* to the *Donour* of 'em! As if the *mercies* of *God* like the *Stars* were lost in their own *Croud*, and the fewer *Returns* of thankful *Love* were due to him, because the *Streams* of his *Goodness* flow to us in such an

uninterrupted Current ! How little do we delight in near approaches to, and intimate Converses with the Blessed God ! How little do we *long* and *thirst*, and *pant* after him with impatient Desires to know, and resemble, and enjoy him more ! How little do we find of that ravishing Delight which the inward persuasion and sense of an Interest in him, has been wont to raise holy Souls unto ! How little do our Hearts aspire towards *Heaven*, as the *Region* and *Element* of perfected *Love* ! Nay, how little does the vigour of our Love to God express and discover it self in our enlarged *Zeal* for his Interest and Glory ! How little do we long for, or sensibly rejoyce in the Advancement of his Kingdom in the World ! May we not blush to think that his matchless Excellencies and Glories shou'd no more recommend him to our highest Esteem and Veneration ! That his great and numberless Benefits shou'd no more endear him to our Minds ! That our backward and disinclined Hearts shou'd tend with no freer and swifter motions towards him our Supreme and only satisfying Good ! That our debased Affections shou'd relish no more

more of ravishing Delight in him! That the woful remains of carnal Affections shou'd render it almost doubtful, whether *God* or the *World* have the sovereignty in our Hearts! Methinks when we consider how infinitely he deserves our best Affections, and what he has done to Attract and Engage'em; there is nothing shou'd either more *humble* and *abase*, or *grieve* and *afflict* us, than that we love him no more.

And if you are indeed sensible of, and truly *Lament* over the culpable Defects of your *Love to God*; I wou'd then,

II. Hence *Exhort* and *Urge* all of you to love the *Lord your God*, and that according to the *Extent* of this great Command, *with all your Heart, and Soul, and Mind*.

I have already suggested, that in order hereto, we must endeavour that the grounds of *Enmity* be remov'd by a happy *mutual Reconciliation*; we must beg the Spirit of Adoption; we must cast out whatever is inconsistent with the Love of God. Now in order to our growing both in the *Habit* and in the lively *Exercise* of *Divine Love*, I shall add a few

farther *Directions*, and enforce 'em with a few *Motives*.

For Direction.

1. *Let us habituate our Souls more to frequent Contemplations of the amiable Excellencies of God, especially of his attractive Goodness.*

For what means can be more proper to inflame *Divine Love*, than to fix our Eyes on the infinite *Loveliness* and *Glory* of that *Blessed Being*?

And here we may distinctly contemplate 'em as they shine out to us in the *Works of Nature, Grace and Glory.*

In the Works of Nature. For with how attractive Lustre do the amiable *Glories* of the *Divine Nature* appear to us in the *Glass* of this *visible World*! How marvellous is that *Almighty Power* that spoke this vast *Universe* into Being, and still upholds and regulates the motions of all his *Creatures* in it! How adorable is that *Wisdom* that has establish'd such an *Order* and *Connection*, such a *mutual Subserviency* and *Dependence*, and consequently such a *beauteous Symmetry* and *Harmony* amongst so vast a *Variety* of *Beings*! But especially
how

how admirable is that boundless *Benignity* and *Love* that extends and diffuses it self thro' the whole Creation! How do the liberal Supplies of Divine Providence, suited to the Necessities of every living Thing, proclaim that *God is good to all, and that his tender Mercies are over all his Works*, Ps. 145. How is the whole *Earth fill'd with his Goodness*, and even with the particular marks of his Goodness to us! Every *Object* we are surrounded with declares it; every *Sense* is a *Witness* of it; our *Eyes* behold it in the *brightness* of the *Heavens*, and in the *verdure* and *fruitfulness* of the *Earth*; our *Palates* taste it in all those liberal Provisions for our Necessity and Delight, that the *Air*, the *Earth*, and *Sea* furnish us with; our *Nostrils* smell it in the fragrant *odour* of *Herbs* and *Flowers*; our *Ears* hear it in *delicious* and *harmonious* Sounds; we feel it in the *warm beams* of the *Sun*, and in the *refreshing breezes* of the *Air*; we abundantly *Enjoy* it in all *conveniencies* and *comforts* of Life, which the Divine Liberality so richly imparts to us. And shall not so bright Discoveries of his incomparable *Excellencies*; especially of

his infinite *Goodness* possels our Minds with adoring Thoughts of him, and powerfully draw our Affections to him! Shou'd we not love Him, whose *beneficent Love* is as an *overflowing Fountain*, from whence all his *Creatures* and we our selves daily derive such *refreshing Streams*?

Let us farther contemplate the amiable Glory of God, in the *Works* of *Redemption* and *Grace*.

And here indeed, that blessed Being dos yet more *Illustriously* appear to us to be *infinite Love* it self, and consequently most deserving of our superlative Love, 1 *John* 4. 8.

O let us often contemplate the love of God in that brightest *Image* and *Mirror* of it his *incarnate Son*, if we wou'd have our Hearts transformed into Divine Love! Let us behold the *Eternal Word* cloth'd with our despicable Nature, subject to all our *Infirmities* and *Miseries*, going about doing good, and spending a laborious Life in continued Acts of *Compassion* to the Bodies and Souls of Men! Especially, Let us behold the *Son of God* presenting himself as the *Substitute* and *Sacrifice* of guilty and worth-

worthless Sinners ! Let us contemplate him in his dying Agonies on the Cross, as there made a spectacle of the extreamest Disgrace and Misery, Shame and Pain; as there *bearing our Sins in his own Body*, and redeeming *our wretched Life* at the expence of his own. And can we view so *moving an Object* without feeling some ardours of Love kindled in our Breasts towards our God and Saviour; towards that *Blessed Saviour* who thus *lov'd us*, and *wash'd us from our Sins in his own Blood*; towards our *Heavenly Father*, who *spared not his own dear Son*, but *thus freely gave him up for us*; who so *lov'd us*, when we *lov'd not him*, as to *send his own Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins*? Rom. 8. 32. 1 John 3. 10. Can we consider such a *Breadth and Length*, such a *Height and Depth of Divine Love*, and our Hearts not be warm'd with the believing Meditations of it? Nay, let us read the Love of God in the Language of his gracious Covenant, that contains such marvellous proposals of infinite Mercy, such *great and precious Promises*, made to those whom their guilt had thrown upon the very brink of *Eternal Ruin*. O

let

let us contemplate the matchless *Clemency* and *Pity* of God, glorifying it self upon all our *Sin* and *Guilt*, *superabounding* towards those whose *Iniquities* had so greatly *Abounded*; Let us behold his *efficacious Grace*, *quickning* dead *Souls* to *spiritual Life*, transforming perverse *Enemies* and *Rebels* into reconciled and adopted *Sons*, moulding *Vessels of Mercy* and *Honour* out of the *corrupt Mass* of *Mankind*; Let us contemplate his *astounding Mercy*, rescuing the miserable *Slaves* of *Satan*, to make 'em *Associates* with *Angels*, and of *Heirs* of *Hell*, making *Heirs* of *Eternal Glory*; And shall not such amazing *Discoveries* of *unparallel'd Love* be powerful *Incentives* to *Divine Love*? Shall so *transcendent Benefits* conferr'd on so undeserving *Wretches*, by such *wonders* of *Mercy* and *Grace*, make no *sutable Impressi-*
on on our *Hearts*? Can any *Returns* of *Affection* on our *part* be too great; nay can any bear a tolerable *proportion* to such vast *Obligations* of *Divine Love*.

But to add no more, let us also contemplate the amiable *Excellencies* of God as shining forth in the *Works* of *Glory*.

And

And there indeed are the brightest *Discoveries*; and richest *Communications* of the Love of God, as the most powerful *Attractive* to ours. 'Tis true, we have now no immediate sight of 'em. We can only by Faith take a distant view, as *Moses* might on Mount *Nebo* have a remote *prospect* of the *promised Land*. O let us then often by *Faith* foresee what we shall e'er long *Behold* and *Enjoy*.

Let us contemplate the *amiable* *Glory* of God, as it shines out to all the *Blessed* in the *Regions* of perfect *Light*. Let us contemplate them as now possessing the *fulness of Joy* in his immediate *Presence*, and partaking of those ravishing *Pleasures* that are at his right *Hand* for evermore, Pl. 16. ult. Let us by Faith behold the *Dignity* and *Honour*, the *Perfection* and *Excellency*, the *Felicity* and *Bliss* to which they are now advanc'd, and let us consider, that what they now *Enjoy*, we have the sure promise of; those unconceivable *Glories* which they *Possess*, are also *reserved* for us. For us that *unchangeable Kingdom*, and that *Immortal Crown* is prepared; for us that *incorruptable Inheritance* is laid up; and shall

shall not our *Faith* excite something of those *ardours* of *Divine Love*, which actual *Possession* will raise us to! Shall we not even here feel something of that Heavenly *Affection* that flames in the Breasts of *glorify'd Saints*, when we are the joyful *Expectants* of that *Felicity* which they *Inherit*! Sure if our *Thoughts* were more conversant with Heaven, more of this pure *Celestial Fire* wou'd descend into and warm our *Hearts*.

And indeed this *direction* is to absolutely necessary, that 'tis in vain ever to expect that our *Exercises* of *Divine Love* shou'd arise to any considerable *height* and *fervour* without frequent *Meditation* on the *attractive Glory* of God. How shou'd that amiable *Object* affect and ravish our *Hearts* if we shut our *Eyes* upon it! How shou'd we feel the warm *beams* of the *Sun*, if we do not turn our selves *towards* it! 'Tis serious and frequent *Meditations* of God must supply the *fuell* for *kindling* and *keeping alive* this heavenly *Flame* in our *Hearts*.

2. Let us endeavour to *clear up* the *Evidence* of our *Interest* in the *Love* of God; and that will greatly facilitate the *Exercise* of our *Love* to him.

We

We love him because he first loved us, 1 John 4. 19. And therefore the stronger persuasion and sense we have of his peculiar Love; it will be the more powerful Incentive to the Love of him. 'Tis when the Love of God is by his Spirit shed abroad in our Hearts, (in the delightful gust and relish of it) that our devout Affections are the most enlarg'd towards him. O let us then beware of whatever might alienate the Heart of God from us, and intercept those beams of his Love, which must continually maintain this Divine warmth in our Hearts? Let's especially avoid all presumptuous Sins; which by extinguishing the sense of his Favour cast a damp upon our holy Affections: Ye that love the Lord hate Evil. Let us herein exercise our selves to keep a Conscience void of all Offence towards God, that we may daily walk in the reviving sense of his gracious Acceptance: And then how sweet and refreshing will the Thoughts of God be! What gladness and Joy will the Light of his Countenance diffuse into our Hearts? How delightful will it be to draw nigh to him! With what satisfying Complacency and Joy

Joy shall we reflect upon our *Propriety* and *Interest* in him ! How wou'd that lively Sense of his most undeserved and unparallel'd Love continually prompt us to some futable Returns of Devout Affection and Gratitude towards him ! How wou'd the view of our great *Obligations* to him inflame us with ingenuous Zeal for his Interest and Glory.

3. Let us often review what we have *Experienc'd* of this distinguishing Love of God to our selves.

'Tis his *Power* that has given us our *Being* and *Life* ; 'tis the *Wings* of his *Providence* have been our continual *Protection* and *Defence* ; 'tis his *liberal Hand* has *Supplied* all our *Necessities* ; 'tis his *tender Pity* has *supported* us under all our *Afflictions*, and *reliev'd* us in all our *Distresses* and *Straits* ; 'tis his *infinite Love* that has not only provided a *Saviour* for us, but caus'd the *glad Tidings* of that great Salvation to *sound* in our *Ears*. 'Tis his *singular Favour* that has cast our *Lot* in a *Land* and *Age* of Light, that has blest us with such early *Advantages* of pious Education, and such precious *Seasons* of *Divine Grace*. 'Tis especially his *discriminating Grace* that has

has open'd our *blind Eyes*, and conquer'd our *rebellious Hearts*, and made us his *willing People in the Day of his Power*, *Pf. 110. 3.* 'Tis his *sovereign Mercy* that has receiv'd us into his *Alliance and Covenant*, *Adopted us into his Family*, and made us the *Heirs of his Eternal Kingdom*. 'Tis his *powerful Grace* that has so often assisted us in our *Duty*, help't our *infirmities*, supported us under our *Tryals*, made us *victorious over our Temptations*, and recover'd us from *Declensions and Back-slidings*. 'Tis his *boundless Mercy* that has *blotted out our numberless Transgressions*, and restor'd to our *wounded Souls the Joy of his Salvation*. 'Tis he has so often heard our *Prayers*, *heal'd our Diseases*, and *Crown'd us with his Loving-kindness*. 'Tis he has engag'd to give *Grace here*, and *Glo-ry hereafter*, and to *with-hold no good Thing from us*. And shall not so *Abundant, so constant Experience* of so *marvellous Love*, deeply affect our *Hearts*, and excite 'em to the most enlarged *Exercises of grateful Love*? Shall we not call upon our *Souls* to *bless the Lord*, and upon all that is *within us* to *extol his Name*? *Pf. 103. 1, 2.* Shall we ever
lose

lose the thankful Impression of so *numberless* and so *valuable* Benefits? Pf. 103. 1, 2. What less can he deserve than *all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind* to be offer'd up as a *Sacrifice* to him in the *Flames of Devout Affection*, to whose undeserved Love we owe all that we have or hope for!

4. *Emprove all other Graces in subser-
vency to Divine Love.*

Let thy Exercises of *Repentance* for Sin prepare thee for those Exercises of *grateful Love*, which the sense of pardoning Mercy will prompt thee to. Let thy filial *Fear* preserve thee from relapsing into those *Sins* that wou'd intercept the rays of Divine Love, and cast a damp on thy ingenuous Affections towards thy heavenly Father. Especially, Let all the Exercises of thy *Faith* and *Hope* on unseen heavenly Objects furnish thee with the most powerful *Incentives* to Divine Love. 'Tis the genuine Property of Divine *Faith* that it *works by Love*. All the realizing Views that our Faith gives us of an unseen Eternal Glory shou'd enflame our Affections towards that blessed God who in his infinite Love has

Serm. III. Of GOD. 339

has prepar'd so great and glorious Things for all that sincerely love him. And the more vigorous Expectations we entretain of being the happy Possessors of that heavenly Inheritance, the more ardently shou'd we love our heavenly Father, by whose undeserv'd Mercy we are preordain'd unto it : So that all the Exercises of our Faith and Hope shou'd be subservient to the higher Exercises of Divine Love : *Love* being the *End* which *Faith* and *Hope* are the *Means* to promote.

To excite you to this Excellent Duty, I shall only subjoin a few Motives
As,

I. Consider, *That Rational self-Love shou'd prompt us to the love of God.*

For if we can be no otherwise happy for ever but in his *Favour* and *Love*; and if we are utterly incapable hereof without a *superlative Love of him*, we then most regularly and effectually love our selves when we place our highest Affections on God. For indeed (as I suggested before) he therefore chiefly courts our *Love* that he may have the fit occasion of making us for ever blessed in the liberal Communications of his own goodness.

2. Con-

2. Consider, *That thus to love God is the principal End of thy Being.*

It was for this, thou hadst a rational *Mind* capable to behold his amiable *Excellencies* and a rational *Will* capable to embrace and choose him as the most perfect and satisfying Good. For this purpose has God given thee thy *Affections* that thou might'st Consecrate 'em unto him, and offer 'em as *hallowed Fire* upon his *Altar* : Nay for this End, the *Son of God* came from the bosom of the Father with the most glorious Discoveries of his infinite Love, that he might draw up thy Heart in ardent Love to him. Nay for this End was the *Spirit of Adoption* sent into thy Heart, that he might *shed abroad the Love of God there*, and bring thy Soul under the ingenuous *Constraints* thereof. And wilt thou not live up more to the great End for which thou wert made; nay for which thou wert *redeem'd* and *renew'd*?

3. Consider, *How little any thing else can deserve thy best Affections.*

All the amiable *Excellency* and *Goodness* that is to be found in the best of Creatures, is but as a *drop* deriv'd from the *Ocean*, or rather but a dark *shadow*
of

of the Divine *Perfections*. All desirable Enjoyments here are but *streams* that issue from him the inexhaustible *source* of all good. And shall we prefer these *broken Cisterns* before the *Fountain* of living *Waters*? Shall a *finite* and *dependent*, a *mutable* and *perishing*, be preferred in our Affections before the *Infinite*, *Unchangeable* and *All-satisfying* Good?

Nay, shall even the most despicable and debasing Vanities be *Rivals* with him for thine Heart? And such are all things that stand in competition with him. 'Tis the highest Disparagement to thy own Understanding and Judgment, to think any thing more worthy of thy highest Love than that infinitely amiable Being. What shou'd, what can attract a rational Affection, if a conjunction of all *other* possible Excellencies with boundless *Goodness* will not do it? If such a faint appearance of Loveliness and Beauty in any Creature here, carry such *Charms* with it, How irresistible *ones* shoudst thou find in the *Father of Lights*, in whom there is no *Darkness* or *Blemish* at all? If a few inconsiderable *Benefits* receiv'd from a *Relation* or *Friend* here can do so much

to endear 'em; How much more shou'd the numberless and far greater Benefits thou hast deriv'd from God, give him a superlative Interest in thy grateful Affections?

4. Consider, *the great and precious Promises that are made to this Duty.*

I shall only mention those two comprehensive Ones; the one relating to *this Life*, *That all things shall work together for good to them that Love God* Rom. 8. 28. The other relating to the *Life to come*, *That the things which Eye hath not seen nor Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the heart of Man to conceive, are prepared by God for them that truly love him*, 1 Cor. 11. 9. See also, *Jam. 1. 12*. So that the more we improve in the ingenuous Exercises of *Love to God*, the more we are prepared and fitted for the largest *Communications of his special Love to us.*

5. Let us consider, *That our Love to God is not only an effectual Means unto, but a considerable Ingredient of our future Perfection and Blessedness.*

And 'tis on this account that the Apostle Paul when he compares those three radical Graces, of *Faith, Hope*
and

and *Love*, gives *Divine Love* the preference. *The greatest of these* (saith he) *is Love*, 1 Cor. 13. 13. And no wonder when as he intimate to us, We have only occasion for the Exercise of *Faith* and *Hope* in this State of Imperfection and Distance, while the *Happiness* we expect is *future* and *unseen* : But *Faith* will e'er long be exchange'd for *Vision* and *Hope* for *Enjoyment*. These will then vanish : But *Divine Love* will abide for ever. For there we shall behold the most glorious *Manifestation*, and partake of the fullest *Communications* of the *Love of God*; and consequently our Hearts will be most elevated and enlarg'd in the Exercise of *Love to him*: And indeed *Love to God* as it implies the Souls highest *Complacency* and *Satisfaction* in him, is its final felicitating Act.

We can have no higher Notion of the *happiness* of the heavenly Inhabitants then that they perfectly *love God*, and are perfectly *belov'd by him*; that they are entirely *pleasing to him*, and most fully *pleased in him* for ever. So that the more we feel of the warm and vigorous Exercises of delightful *Love*, the more we feel of *Heaven* already begun. *He that*

dwells in Love dwells in God, and God in him, 1 John 4. 16. He is as it were received into the Embraces, he is Imparadis'd in the bosom of Infinite Love. We shou'd therefore as earnestly aspire to the greatest Ardours of Divine Love, as we wou'd to the highest Degrees of the heavenly Blessedness. For in this heavenly Exercise our Work and our Wages, our Duty and our Reward are inseperably conjoyn'd for ever. To love God with all our Heart, &c. is to make him the Centre of our everlasting Delight and Rest.

3 NO 63

FINIS.

SERMONS

ON

Our Love to
Our Neighbour.

SERM. I.

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verse, 39, 40.

By J. B.

DUBLIN:

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SERMONS

ON

THE

CHURCH



Vol. I.

Part XXII

OF

THE

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On our Love to
Our Neighbour.

SERM. III.

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verf. 39, 40.

Verf. 39. *And the second is like to it; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

40. *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* —

I Have already consider'd that *first* and *great Commandment* mentioned in the Verses foregoing, even that of *Loving the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.* And as our Blessed Saviour proposes that for the comprehensive *Summary* of the *Duties* of the *first Table*; to in the Words I have now read, he sets before us as comprehensive a *Compendium* of the *Duties* of the *Second Table*.

And tho' the *Command* I have been already urging, ought to have the *precedency*, as enjoyning a Duty of far greater importance and Excellency in it self (even the sublimest *Act* of true Religion, and that immediately directed to and terminated upon the Highest and most glorious *Object*, the Blessed God himself.) Yet if we consider the stress which our Saviour lays upon this *Command* in my Text, it does as truly deserve our most attentive Consideration in order to our conscientious Practice, as the other; and our observance of it is as truly necessary to our present *Acceptance* and final *Reward*. *The second* (saith our Blessed Saviour) *is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* The

Serm I. *our Neighbour.* 349

The *Subject* then of our present Consideration lies plain before us, viz.

That to Love our Neighbour as ourselves, is a Command like unto the first and greatest of loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.

In prosecution of this important Subject; I shall,

First, *Explain the Command it self; to love our Neighbour as ones self.*

Secondly, I shall consider on what account our Lord saith, that this Command is like the First and Greatest, viz. Of loving God, &c.

First, I shall endeavour to *Explain the Command it self, viz. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

And here we must distinctly consider, I. The *Object* propos'd to our Love, our Neighbour, II. The *Substance* of the *Duty* it self, our loving Him; and what particular *Acts* that includes. III. The *Extent* or *Measure* of the *Duty*, *Thou shalt love Him as thy self.*

I. We must here consider the *Object* propos'd to our Love, viz. *Our Neighbour.*

And

And whom we must understand by our *Neighbour*, our Blessed Lord has fully resolv'd, in his Answer to the Question propos'd by the self-Justifying *Pharisee*; Luke 10. 29. 'Tis evident that the *Jewish Doctors* generally suppos'd this Command (as delivered by *Moses*) to extend only to those that were of the *same Religion* with 'em; to those that were their *Neighbours* or *near* to 'em in the Bonds of that sacred *Society*, from which they accounted all others *Aliens* and *Foreigners*. Fortho' the Law of *Moses* requir'd that they shou'd extend this love to *Strangers*; yet they understood it only of such *Strangers* as were *Proselytes*, and such as embrac'd their Religion, and subjected themselves to the Mosaick Law. Now our Saviour to convince 'em that the Law of *loving our Neighbour* extended much farther, even to all that were *near* to us by the Bonds of *Nature* and *human Society*, proposes this Instance to 'em (whether as a *History* or only a *Parable*; 'tis not material to Enquire.)

There lay a *Man* upon the Road between *Jerusalem* and *Jericho*, *stript* and *wounded by Thieves*, who left him half
Dead,

Dead; so that without speedy help and succour he must have inevitably Perish'd. A *Priest* and a *Levite* came by (Persons whose very *Office* shou'd have inspir'd 'em with a more eminent degree of *Charity*.) But they contented themselves with a transient view of so miserable an Object, and left him in the same deplorable condition they found him. No doubt they were ready to pretend in excuse for themselves, that they knew not *who* he was. If they had known him to be a *Jew* or a *Proselyte*, they wou'd have extended their Pity and Charitable help to him. But for any thing they could tell, he might be an *impure Gentile*, or (what was as bad) an *Apostate Samaritan*, and then what had they to do with him? But a *Samaritan* Journeys that way, and meeting with this sad Spectacle of Misery, his bowels of Compassion yearn towards him, he binds up his Wounds, he sets him on his own Beast, conveys him to an *Inn*, gives order about, and furnishes the necessary expence for his Cure. He never enquires, was he a *Samaritan*, or *Jew*, or *Gentile*, was he *Circumcis'd*, or *Uncircumcis'd*, one that *Worship'd* at *Jerusalem*,

or *Mount Gerizim*; he only consider'd in him the *common Nature of Man*, and his present *Calamity* and *Distress* that call'd for *Relief* and *Succour* from one that was his *fellow-Creature*, and that he judg'd a sufficient *Inducement* and *Motive* to do all this for him. And therefore our Saviour leaves the *Pharisee* himself to determine the Case. Who had acted towards the poor wounded Man the true part of a *Neighbour*, and express'd the Love to him that's due to a *Neighbour*? And we may observe, how admirably our Lord calculates the *History* or *Parable* (whethersoever it be) for the conviction of the *Pharisee*; had it been a *Samaritan* that lay Wounded, he wou'd have been perhaps ready to excuse the *uncharitableness* of the *Priest* and the *Levite*, as no way oblig'd to pity his Case. But it being a *Jeze* that lay thus Wounded, and a *Samaritan* that thus reliev'd him, he cou'd not but applaud and commend the *Compassion* of the *Samaritan*, who without any enquiry, who the Man was, took him for his *Neighbour*, and shew'd him that pity and kindness which in the like forlorn Circumstances he wou'd have desired and expected himself.

So

So that according to our *Saviour's* clear Determination, *every Man* is our *Neighbour*, whom we have an opportunity and capacity of doing good to. Nay even our *Enemies* themselves are not excluded from this Character; and consequently to them also must our *Love* extend. As our *Saviour* positively Asserts, Mat. 5. 43, 44, 45. No difference of *Nation* or *Country*, of *Faith* and *Religion*, nay, no consideration of *personal Enmity* it self must shut out any from being the Objects of this enlarged *Charity* which this Precept enjoyns, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour*, - every one that's *near* to thee, by that common *Blood of which God has made all Nations*, by that *reasonable Nature*, which all Mankind are partakers of, be he *Protestant* or *Papist*, *Christian* or *Infidel*, *Turk* or *Jew*; he is at least *near* to thee, as he is thy *fellow-Creature*, and as a *Member* of *God's universal Kingdom*, to which all Men do belong. And that is a sufficient reason why thou shoud'st love him, and that even *as thy self*. 'Tis true indeed, there are different *Degrees* of that *Love* we owe to Objects, according to the different *Degrees* of *Amiability*

inability in 'em, and accordingly the *Effects* of our Love must be suitably *Different*; but in general, Love is due to all Men, and there must be no limitation here in the *Object* of it.

I come therefore,

II. To consider the *Substance* of the Duty here Enjoyn'd, viz. To love our Neighbour, and the particular *Acts* included therein.

For the Duty in general, of Loving our Neighbour, to apprehend it aright, we must distinguish between *Natural sensitive Love*, and *rational Love*; and between the *internal Acts* of rational Love, and the *external Effects* of it.

There is a *Natural sensitive Love* which every Man bears to himself, founded on the sensible Perception of *Pleasure and Pain*, of sensitive Good or Evil. And this kind of Love we cannot extend to our Neighbour; we can no more feel his Pain and Misery, than his Hunger or Thirst. And we can have no more sensible perception of his Pleasure, than of his Pain. Every Man feels the one and the other for himself, and they are no more communicable to others

others than his individual Nature it self. And consequently this *sensitive Love* is not here to be understood.

And what is here said of the *Natural sensitive Love* we bear to *our selves*, is equally applicable to that *Love* that is founded on some *particular Relations* we bear to others. Thus *Parents* have that *Natural sensitive Affection* to their *own Children*, which they cannot have to the *Children of others*, conformable to the tender *Affection* to their own *Young*, which is observable even in *Bruits* themselves. The like may be said of the *Love* peculiar to the *conjugal Relation*, which the reason and ground of plainly intimates that it ought to be confin'd to its *particular Object*.

The *Love* then to *our Neighbour*, which the Text enjoyns, must be understood of purely *Rational*, as distinguish'd from *sensitive Love*. That *rational Love* I mean, of which *Goodness* is the proper abstracted *Object*, and which ought therefore to bear a proportion to the *Degrees* of that *Goodness* in the *Person* we *Love*.

And of this *rational Love* we must consider the *Internal Acts*, and the genuine *External Effects*. Z For

For the *Internal Acts* of it, we may easily infer what they are by considering what is included in the general Notion of *Love*.

To love our Neighbour then, is to esteem whatever we behold of *amiable Goodness* in him; to value and be pleas'd with whatever we see of the *Divine Likeness* in him. To be duly affected with whatever we discern of *attractive Excellency* in him.

To love him is to desire his real *Welfare* and *Happiness*, and to Rejoyce in whatever degree and measure of it we see him Possess'd of; 'tis heartily to wish and pray for his *Prosperity* and *well-Being*, and to resent it with unfeigned *Satisfaction* and *Delight*.

To love him is to have a sincere and ready *Inclination* of Soul, so far as we have a just *Call* and *Opportunity* to do him all the good we can, by promoting his present or his *Eternal Welfare*. Our Love must include a promptitude of Mind (according to our *Obligations* and *Abilities*) to lay out our selves in any Acts of *Beneficence* and *Kindness* that may be serviceable to his real, and especially to his Highest *Eternal Interest*.

And

And our *love* to our Neighbour must be consider'd as opposite to any such perverse Disinclination or *evil Affection* towards him, as wou'd prompt us to do him wittingly or wilfully the least *harm* or *prejudice*, or to oppose and obstruct his real Temporal or Eternal Welfare and Good.

These *Heads* I shall content my self with briefly suggesting here, because I shall have proper occasion to enlarge upon 'em when I come to *enforce* the *practice* of this Excellent Duty.

I proceed therefore to the

III. General *Head*. viz. To consider the *Extent* and *Measure* of this *Duty*, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*.

And here we may for the clearing this Subject, distinctly consider, what *is not*, and what *is imply'd* in this emphatical Expression, and why *self-Love* is thus made the *Measure* of our *Duty* to others?

Negatively, To love our Neighbour as our selves *does not imply*.

1. That we shou'd *love him* with the *same sensitive Love* we bear to *our selves*.

For that I have shew'd to be impossible, while we have not the same sensitive perception of this Pleasure or Pain, as of our own.

2. Nor does it imply, that our rational Love shou'd extend to all in an equal Degree.

For even our Love to our selves must vary according to the various Degrees of our own Amiability and Goodness. The same Person may justly take a higher Complacency and Delight in himself, when renew'd and sanctify'd by Divine Grace, than he ought to take in himself, while as yet Unregenerate and Wicked; because the God-like Qualities that he is now endued with, have render'd him more truly Lovely: And so our love to Men must vary in Degree, according to the different Attractives thereof, that appear in 'em. We are not oblig'd to take that complacency in a Son of Belial, that we shou'd in a Child of God.

The Saints on Earth must be in a peculiar manner our Delight. We must indeed love with a benevolent Affection all Men in whom God's natural Image appears; but we must Love those much more with a more endeared delightful Affe-

Affection, on whom the *Moral Image* of God is Stamp'd. Nay even our *Love to good Men* must in *Degree* vary according to the *different Measures* of that glorious *Likeness* of His that shines in 'em.

3. Nor does the Expression imply, that we must extend all *External Effects* of our *Love equally to all*, nor to *all* in an *equal Degree* as to *our selves*.

Thus tho' we must do good to all, yet there must be a peculiar preference in our *Acts of Beneficence* given to those that *are of the Houshold of Faith*, Gal. 6. 7. v. Nay, since our *Power of doing Good*, is but *limited and confin'd* to a narrow Sphere, it must ordinarily be chiefly exercis'd towards those whose welfare God has bound us more especially to take the care of (both their *Souls and Bodies* being our *peculiar Charge*.) Thus we are not bound equally to provide for *all* indigent Persons, as for those of our *own Family*. Nor are we oblig'd to take equal pains by holy Instructions and Counsels to promote the eternal Salvation of all we converse with, as of those under our particular Inspection.

So that many *Effects* of our *beneficent Love* must be ordinarily directed by the *particular Relations* wherein we stand to others, tho' they must not be so *limited* to 'em, as to *exclude* all others whom we have real Ability and Opportunity of doing good to, without any injury to those under our stated Charge.

And as this Precept does not require, That all *Effects* of our *beneficent Love* shou'd equally *extend to all*; so neither dos it require that they shou'd *extend to all* in an *equal degree* as to *our selves*. For we are not oblig'd to take as much pains for the sustenance and comfort of *every Man's Life* as for *our own*; nor to use equal Industry in promoting *their Salvation* as in securing *our own*.

But *positively* our *Loving our Neighbour as our selves*, implys, That we shou'd make that *Rational Love* we justly bear to our selves, so far the *Standard and Measure* of the Love we bear to our *Neighbour*, as to love him *impartially* according to what we discern of *amiable Goodness* in him; as we justly love our selves according to our own.

I have already suggested, That the *Object* of *Rational Love* is *Goodness*:

And

And consequently the proper *Object* of our *Love to others* must be some apprehended amiable *Excellency* in 'em. Now there is in all Men some amiable *Likeness* and *Resemblance* of God to recommend 'em to our Love. There is in the worst of Men that *spiritual reasonable Nature* that bears the bright Characters of him who is *the Father of Spirits*. There is in them also a *capacity* of being recover'd to the *moral Image* of God, and consequently of being for ever happy in him. Even they are our *Fellow-Creatures* and *Fellow-Subjects*; as we are all of us *Members* of God's *Universal Kingdom* here below. But there is in many the brighter *Moral-Image* of God, (consisting in *Wisdom, Righteousness* and *true Holiness*) which is more amiable and deserving of *our higher Love*.

Now this *Rational Love* that chiefly consists in the *Estimation* of the *Understanding* and *Complacency* of the *Will*, must *impartially* bear a true proportion to the *goodness* that appears in others, as they are *God's Creatures* or his *Children*. We must no more fall short of any due *degree* of love to *them* than of love to

our selves. We must love every *natural Man* as our *natural selves*, and every *Saint* as we do *our selves* under that *Character* and *Notion* : Nay the more God has imparted to any of *natural Endowments* or *common Gifts* or *gracious* and *divine Qualities*, the more *amiable* must they be to us. So that as far as we see others herein excel us, so far must we love 'em, even *more* than *our selves*. Even as we must love *Christ* as *Man* more than our selves, as being a more glorious *Image* and *Mirroure* of the *Invisible God* : And as we must love *God* more than *our selves*, as being infinitely more *Excellent* and *Amiable*.

And accordingly our *Love* to others must appear in the genuine *Exercise* of it.

We must as truly *rejoyce* in the *Good* of others as in our *own*, especially in the publick *extensive welfare* of *Civil* or *Sacred Societies*, of *Kingdoms* or *Churches*. The *welfare* of such *Societies* must be more valued by us and be more the matter of our *Delight* than *our own*, as being truly more *valuable* and *desireable*. We must relish a higher pleasure therein as a more comprehensive *means* of glorifying and pleasing God.

So

So we must *desire the welfare* of others as our *own*; and offer up our Prayers with the same Devotion and Ardour for *their Salvation* as for *our own*. That *Universal Charity* must inspire our pious *Wishes* that the tenour of our *Lord's Prayer* suggests to us.

Nay so far as we have a *call* and *opportunity* of *doing good to others*, we must embrace and prosecute it with the same cordial *Zeal* and *Alacrity*, as we wou'd an Opportunity of *doing good to our selves*.

And truly we have great reason to admire the Wisdom of God in the *perspicuity* and *clearness* of this excellent *Precept*, that brings down every Man's Duty as it were to the level of his own Capacity, and constitutes *himself* the *Arbitrator* and *Judge* in reference to what he owes to his *Neighbour*. So that none who follow this Rule impartially can easily fail of any part of his Duty to others. We all of us know what it is to *love our selves*; we are fully conscious to the inward motions of our *Affections* in reference to what concerns our *own Welfare* and *Interest*; we know what we are inclineable and ready to do for *our selves*.
And

And thence we may the more easily determine, what our *Temper* and *Behaviour* towards our *Neighbour* shou'd be.

Do we not take notice of and value any *excellent Qualities* we behold in our selves? Do we not view 'em with inward *Approbation* and *Complacency*? And shou'd we not as highly *esteem* and *approve* what we behold of the like *amiable Image* of God in others? And that *impartially* according to the *degree* of it?

Do we not *rejoyce* in the *prosperity* of our own *external Condition*? Do we not much more relish our *Progress* and *Advancement* in *Knowledge* and *Grace*, our *serviceableness* to the *Interest* of God here, and our *Expectations* of an *Eternal Reward*, with the *highest pleasure*? With the like *satisfaction* of Soul shou'd we view the *flourishing State* of others. The like *delight* shou'd the *Contemplation* of their *Eminency* in *Piety*, their *Usefulness* in the *World*, and their *Heavenly Hopes* yield to our charitable Minds.

Do we not *wish* very well to our selves? Do we not desire *Direction* and *Success* in our lawful *Undertakings* and *Affairs*? Do we not especially most earnestly breathe after *spiritual* and *heavenly* Bles-

Blessings? So cordially shou'd we long for the good of *others*; so affectionately shou'd we *pray* for their *temporal*, but especially for their *Eternal welfare*.

Are we not most *ready* and *industrious* to promote *our own Good*? Do's not *self-Love* prompt us to earnest Endeavours after Succour and Relief under any Exigencies and Distress? Do we not seek and expect *Pitty* and *Compassion*, charitable *Assistance* and *Support* for *our selves*, under our own *Afflictions* or *Straits*? Hence we may judge how *our Love* shou'd work *towards others*, when we have *Ability* and a just *Call* to be *serviceable* and *kind*, *compassionate* and *helpful* unto them.

And indeed when we thus set *our selves* in the *Case* and *State* of *our Neighbour*, when we make *self-Love* the *measure* of our *Affection to him*, There is no great Danger of our Erring on the *Defective Hand*. We are not wont to *fail* in any degree of Love due to our selves; and if we make that our *Standard* we shall as little fail in paying to our Neighbour the *Tribute of Love* that's really due to him. So that *self-Love* when thus rightly improv'd, will instead of *obstructing*

rather *regulate* and *heighten* our God-like Love to others.

What might be farther suggested under this *Head*, will as fitly occur in the *Application*.

But before I enter on that, I must Consider,

Secondly, *Why* our Lord saith of this Command, *That 'tis like the first and greatest, viz. Of loving the Lord, &c.*

Answer. No doubt these Words in general bespeak the great *Excellency* of it. For as I before suggested, The foregoing *Command* is the *summary* of all true *Piety*, and the *Substance* and *Soul* of all *inward vital Religion*. So that our Saviour cou'd not have given a higher *Commendation* to this *Precept* than to pronounce it *like unto that*.

Not that our Lord here intends to intimate an *absolute Equality* in these two *Commands*, as if the former did not justly challenge any *preference* in point of *Dignity* and *Excellency* as well as *Order*. For doubtless our *Duty* towards God is of infinitely greater importance and moment than our *Duty* towards our fellow-Creatures. And as his attractive *Amiability* infinitely transcends theirs, so do
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our *Obligations* to love him transcend any we can have to love *our Neighbour*. There is no comparison then betwixt 'em, if we respect the *intrinsique Excellency* of the *Duty* commanded.

But yet our Lord do's upon very solid grounds resemble this *second* to that *first* and *Great Command* : For 'tis truly like unto it, in regard of its *Extent* and *Influence* ; in regard of the *stress* that God is pleased to lay upon it ; and in regard of the *Principle* it springs from.

1. This *Precept* is like the *first* and *great Command*, in regard of its *Extent* and *Influence*.

Is the former *Command* of *Loving the Lord*, &c. a comprehensive *Summary* of all the *Duties* of the *first Table* ? So that where ever this Divine Principle reigns in the Heart, it will dispose and prompt us to all particular *Acts* of true *Piety* ? In like manner, Is this *Command* of *Loving our Neighbour as our selves*, the comprehensive *Summary* of all the *Duties* of the *Second Table*. So that wherever this God-like Affection is predominant in the Heart, it will regulate the whole of our *Conduct* and *Behaviour* towards
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our *Neighbour*, and prompt us to the performance of every particular Duty we owe to him. *All the Law* (saith the Apostle Paul) *is fulfilled in this one Word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, Gal. 5. 14. i. e. All that part of it which the *Second Table* contains. For so he must be understood, as appears from that parallel Place, Rom. 13. 8, 9. *Owe no Man any thing, but to Love one another; for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law.* For this, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery, Thou shalt not Kill, Thou shalt not Steal, Thou shalt not bear false Witness, Thou shalt not Covet; And if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And indeed the reasonableness of what the Apostle suggests concerning the vast compass and extensive influence of this Precept is Manifest and Unquestionable. 'Tis obvious to every one, that if we lov'd our *Neighbour as our selves*, we shou'd be as unwilling to offer violence to his *Life* as to our own; we shou'd no more injure and hurt him, than we wou'd our selves; we shou'd no more be

Serm. I *our Neighbour.* 369

be *angry* with him *without cause*, and *without measure* than with our selves ; we shou'd as readily *forgive* him as we do our selves ; we shou'd no more *De-fraud* and *Over-reach* him than we wou'd ourselves ; we shou'd as heartily promote his temporal Welfare as we do *our own* ; we shou'd no more *defame* and *slander* him than we wou'd ourselves ; we shou'd be as tender of his Reputation as of our own ; we shou'd be as unwilling to *receive* or *credit* any *injurious* or *evil Reports* concerning him, as we are that others shou'd entertain or believe such Reports concerning our selves ; we shou'd no more *repine* at his Prosperity than at our own ; Nay, we shou'd on the contrary as truly *rejoyce* in it as in our own.

So large and powerful is the *Influence* of this Divine Principle. So justly do's our Lord *liken* this Command to the former in respect of the vast *Latitude* and *Extent* of it. But,

2. This Command is like the first and greatest, in regard of the stress that God himself lays upon it.

For 'tis no less necessary to our *Acceptance* and *Reward*, that we Love our *Neighbour as our selves*, than that we love
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the Lord our God, &c. Hence all that are destitute of this Brotherly Love, are as peremptorily Excluded from the Kingdom of God, as those that are destitute of Divine Love it self. He that loves not his Brother, abideth in Death; He that hates him has no right to Eternal Life, 1 John, 3. 14; 15. Nay, the Blessed God will not own that Love we pretend to him for genuine and sincere, which is not productive of unfeigned Love to others. If a Man say, I love God, and hates his Brother, he is a Liar; For he that loves not his Brother whom he hath seen, How shall he love God, whom he hath not seen? 1 John, 4. 20. Nay, as no External Acts of piety are acceptable to God, but what are animated by Divine Love; so no External Duties towards Men are pleasing to him, if they spring not from this God-like Disposition. 'Tis this gives 'em a Divine Tincture, and renders 'em genuine Resemblances and Imitations of the Divine Benignity and Goodness. To forbear Revenge without Charity, is only Stupidity or Cowardise. But if it spring from that Principle, 'tis true Meekness and Patience. To give Alms without
Chari-

Serm. I. *our Neighbour.* 371

Charity is but *vain-glorious Ostentation*. But that is acceptable *Alms* which not only our *Hand* but our *Heart* it self reaches out, from a tender and Compassionate sense of the Necessities of others. To do a *righteous act* meerly for *Credit* or *Interest* sake, is but an *Act of Policy* : But to do it from that *Charity* that considers our *Brother's Case* as our *own*, and prompts us to *do to him as we wou'd be done unto*, This is indeed true *Christian Justice*. Nay, so great stress do's God lay upon it, that he refuses our *Acts of Devotion* towards him, when unaccompany'd with *charitable Affection* to Men, and will not admit us to present our *offering* on his *Altar*, 'till we are *reconcil'd to our offended Brother*. He is unwilling to *be at peace with us*, 'till we are *at peace with them*; and will receive no *Oblation* from us but what is presented with a *charitable Heart* and *Hand*, See *Matth. 5. 23. 24.*

3. This *Commandment* may be justly said to be *like the first and greatest* of *loving God*, &c. because 'tis indeed the genuine *issue* and *product* of it.

For 'tis on *God's account* that we thus *love our Neighbour as our selves*. For

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withal directs Men to the *Grace* of God for *Strength* to perform it aright, and to his *Mercy* thro' Christ for the *pardon* of our *Defects*, do's truly and faithfully *Preach the Gospel of Christ*. And to call this by way of contempt and diminution, the *Preaching of Morality* argues Men's ignorance of the genuine *Design* of the Christian Religion, all the very *speculative Doctrines* whereof are chiefly calculated to form in our Hearts a *superlative Love of God*, and an *unfeigned Love of Men*, so far as they *Resemble* him, and stand *Related* to him. And O that we cou'd find more of this excellent *Morality* in the *Christian World*! O that we cou'd see the *Faith* Men pretend to, more effectually to *kindle these flames* of *Heavenly Love* in their Hearts! We shou'd then see the genuine *Fruits* of our *Ministry*, and the grand design of *Christianity* attain'd. For the end of the *Commandment* (i. e. of the whole *Divine Revelation*, even of the *Gospel of Christ*, as well as the *Law of Moses* (*παρηγγελιας*) is *Charity* out of a pure *Heart* and good *Conscience* and *Faith* *unfeigned*, 1 Tim. i. 5. i. e. *Love to God* and *Men* springing from a *Heart* puri-
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Serm. I. *our Neighbour.* 377

fy'd from all contrary *corrupt Affections*,
from a *Conscience void of Offence*, and
from unfeigned *Faith* in those great *Truths*,
especially those *precious promises* that con-
tain so powerful *Incentives* to our *Duty*.
How diligently shou'd we then study
this *comprehensive Branch* of the *Di-*
vine Law, even this *royal Law of Love*!
How deeply shou'd we consider our
strong *Obligations* to it! How earnestly
shou'd we *Pray* and *Endeavour* that it
may be *Written in our Hearts*, and be-
come *Conspicuous* and *Legible* in the
whole of our *Conversation*! And such
apprehensions of its importance shou'd
prepare us for the attentive *Consideration*
of what may be farther said to *instruct*
and to *direct* us in this important *Duty*,
and to *Excite* us to the *Practice* of it.
Of which more in the next *Discourse* on
this *Subject*.

F I N I S.

truly pleas'd with it, and will as liberally Reward it, as he is pleas'd with, and will reward our superlative Love to himself! O amazing Condescension, that when the *Disparity* in the Commands is so unconceivable and apparent; he shou'd as it were *Equal* and *Level* 'em by declaring, that this *Second*, of Loving our Neighbour, is like unto the *First* of loving Himself. As it he accounted our Interest to be of equal consideration with his own, or at least were as intent to promote it as to assert his own Right, and secure his own incommunicable Glory.

H. Hence we may farther infer, the vast *Importance* of this Command, and how much it deserves our attentive Consideration, and conscientious Care, in order to the practice of it.

'Tis so far from being one of the smaller Points the minuter Injunctions, or *least Commands* of the Law, such as the tything of Anise and Cumin, that 'tis to be reckon'd among what our Lord accounts the [*τα σκευήματα τῆς νόμου*] *Weightier things of the Law*.

Nay, it must be in our esteem plac'd in a very eminent Rank, as one of the most

Serm. I. *our Neighbour.* 375

most Essential Branches of true Religion, when 'tis thus resembled to the first and great Command. 'Tis indeed *one half* of practical Religion, as *love to God* is the *other*. Let no Man then *despise* or *sight* this Command, by pretending that the enforcing and urging the practice of it is but *preaching Morality*. If by *Morality* they mean only the *External part* of our *Duty* towards Men, such as the *External Acts* of *Justice* or *Mercy*; then I must tell you, that in pressing this *Duty* we *Preach* up *far more* than such *Moralities*. For we require and inculcate the *Exercise* of that *inward Principle* of *God-like Love*, which gives such *External Acts* their true *value* in the sight of God, and we urge the performance of these *External Acts* from the genuine peculiar *Motives* and *Encouragements* which the Gospel suggests. But if by *Morality* they understand the *whole* of our *Duty* towards both *God* and *Man*; 'tis the main business of a Gospel Minister to *Preach* up such *Morality* as this. And he that urges Men to the practice of such *Morality*, I mean the *Love of God and Man*, enforcing it by the genuine *Arguments* the Gospel suggests, and

'tis the *Image of God* (either *natural* or *moral*, or *both*) that must endear him to us, and powerfully attract our Affection. So that indeed *Brotherly Love* is a genuine *Branch* that springs from the *Root of Divine Love*, and do's in a great measure partake of the nature of that excellent and heavenly Principle. *He that loves him that begat, will love him that is begotten of him*, 1 John 5. 1. We do in effect love God himself in loving our *Brother*, because we love our *Brother* on the account of that *Relation* he bears to God, and that *resemblance of God* that's stamp'd upon him.

It remains, That we *Apply* this practical Subject. And

1. Hence we may infer the *infinite Goodness of God*, that so admirably shines out in all his *Laws*, and particularly in this, whereby he has oblig'd us, to love our *Neighbour as our selves*.

It do's argue marvellous *Goodness*, that the Blessed God shou'd be so solicitous to cement the *Society of Mankind* by this *Universal Law of Love*. A Law which if generally and entirely observ'd, wou'd soon become the *Glory and Happiness* of all *sacred and civil Societies*, and render
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this *Earth* a true *Model* of *Heaven*. A *Law* which if duly kept, wou'd effectually prevent all those *Contentions* and *Farrs*, *Animosities* and *Discords*, *Strife* and *Wars*, which are the fruitful *Source* of most of those *Calamities* and *Miseries* that make this *Earth* so wretched and gloomy a scene, and so like to *Hell* it self. So truly are God's *Commands* the genuine *dictates* of his matchless *Goodness*, and adapted to the real *Interest* of those to whom they are delivered. How evidently do's he desire the welfare of his *Creatures*, who lays so strict *Obligations* upon 'em to contribute their utmost to the *Welfare* of *each other*, even as cordially as they wou'd to *their own*!

But yet it enhances the *Goodness* of God the more that he shou'd lay so great a stress on this *Command*, as to conjoyn it to that of loving Himself. How justly might he have even engross'd all our *Affection* to himself, to whose infinitely amiable *Excellencies* and adorable *Goodness* all our *Love* is due! How wonderful is it then, not only that he allows us to give so great a share in our *Love* to our fellow-*Creatures*, but so strictly enjoyns it, and in effect declares that he is as

3 NO 63

On Love to
Our Neighbour.



SERM. II.

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verf 39, 40.

Verf 39. *And the second is like to it; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

40. *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* —

Happiness rather the matter of our secret *Discontent* and *Grief*, than of our *Joy* and *Satisfaction*; and even makes us feel a *hellish Pleasure* in those *Losses* or *Calamities* that cast 'em down from the flourishing Condition in which we envy'd to see 'em Plac'd. 'Tis this makes Men so *immoderately* intent upon their own *narrow Interest*, as to pursue it to the prejudice of the more *considerable Good* of *others*, nay often by the most *Sinful* and *Injurious* means. 'Tis this makes 'em so regardless of the *Welfare* of others, so insensible of their *Miseries*, and so backward to relieve their pressing *Wants*. To what must we ascribe all that *Tyranny* and *Oppression*, *Rigor* and *Severity* in *Princes* and other *civil Superiors*, and all that *disobedience* and *ungovernableness* in *Subjects* and *Inferiors*; and all that *Emulation* and *ambitious Strife* among *Equals*, that are so often the *bane* and *plague* of *human Societies*, but to this *inordinate self-Love*? Nay from this *Source* all those boisterous *Passions* that so often lead to an issue in *Revenge* and *Cruelty*, and *Murder* it self, apparently spring. All that *Covetousness* and *Oppression* of the *Poor*,
all

Serm. II *our Neighbour.* 385

all that *Fraud* and *Repine*, all that *Injustice* and *Extortion*, all that *Prodigality* and *Luxury*, all that *Corrupting* of *Judgment* by *perjur'd Witnesses*, or by *partial Juries*, and *bribed Judges*, nay all the *vexatious Law-Suits*, and the *Animosities* that attend 'em ; In a Word, all those *unjust and uncharitable Actions* that render this *Earth* so like to *Hell*; such a *Scene of Confusion and Disorder*; such a *Theatre of Wars and Contentions*; such a *Vale of Tears* and of *Misery*, are but the genuine *Branches* that sprout up from this *radical Sin* of *inordinate Self-Love*. So that this *Sin* is the genuine, but most hateful *Image of Satan*. 'Tis the malignant *Poyson* that he has diffused into our *Nature*. 'Tis the pregnant *Womb* of all other *Sins* against the *Second-Table*; and (as some judicious *Divines* Assert) 'tis the chief spring of our secret *Aversion* from *God* himself, *Man's Apostacy*, being *his turning from God unto himself*.

And O what reason have those of you in whom this *Sin* is visibly *Predominant*, to look upon it as a black *Mark* of an *unregenerate State* ! He that loves not his *Brother* (saith the *Apostle*, 1 *John*, 3. 15. *abides in Death*. And

sal, so visibly predominant in every Wicked Man, and of which there are such woful *Reliques* even in good Men themselves, that *Obscure* the amiable *Glory* of *Divine Grace* in 'em.

But that we may be more deeply apprehensive of this pernicious *Disease* of our depraved Nature in order to the cure of it. Let us a little consider the usual *Instances* wherein this *inordinate Selfishness* appears, and the lamentable *Effects* that spring from it,

This *Sin* indeed is the Fundamental *Corruption* of the *Will* of Man, which was made to *Love Good as Good*, and consequently the *highest-Good*, with the *highest-Love*. Whereas this *Sin* sets up the *Interest* of every individual Man, nay usually his *Carnal*, and often his *mistaken Interest* above the more *valuable Interest* of others, nay above the *publick Good*, and above the *Glory of God* it self. As if nothing were farther *Good*, and consequently *Amiable*, than as conducive to our *narrow*, nay our sordid *fleshly Self-Interest*. And yet this vile and corrupt *Maxime* of degenerate Nature have some confident *Pretenders* to *Philosophy*, cry'd if up as it were the most

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Serm.II. *our Neighbour.* 383

undoubted *dictate* of our *unprejudic'd Reason*. And 'tis easy to imagine what kind of *Morality* those must teach us that thus make the *radical corruption* of our Nature an *innocent* and *harmless Thing*. But sure we can never entertain such Thoughts of this *inordinate Selfishness*, if we do but consider the genuine *Instances* and *Fruits* of it.

'Tis this *Sin* that produces in us those *Over-magnifying Thoughts* of our selves, and that *inordinate Desire* of being *Over-valued* and *Applauded* by others, that makes us *Envy* the just *Reputation* of others, and strive to exalt our own upon the Ruin of it. 'Tis this *Sin* that prompts us to aspire above the *Condition* wherein Providence has set us, and above the *Station* and *Work* we are truly fitted for, and thereby engages us in *Emulation* and *Strife*, *Hatred* and *Enmity* against all that stand in the way of our ambitious Projects and Designs. 'Tis this *Sin* that makes us look on the more *prosperous Condition* of others with an *envious* and *repining Mind*, as if our *Eye* towards 'em were therefore *Evil*, because the *Eye of God* has been *Good*. 'Tis this that renders *their Welfare* and
Happi-

I Have already enter'd on the Subject which these Words offer to our Meditation, viz.

That to love our Neighbour as our selves, is a Command like unto the first and greatest, of Loving the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.

In prosecution thereof, I propos'd,

First, To explain the Command it self.

And here I consider'd,

I. The Object propos'd to our Love, our Neighbour. i. e. Every one that's near and allied to us, either as a Christian, or as a Man, by the Bonds of Graces or of Nature it self, our Enemies themselves not excluded.

II. I consider'd the Substance of the Duty, *Thou shalt love him.*

III. I consider'd the Extent and Measure of this Duty, *Thou shalt Love him as thy self.*

Secondly, I consider'd, why this Command is said to be like the first and great Command, of loving the Lord our God, &c.

These

These words import not an *Equality* in point of *Excellency*. But yet this *Second* is like to that *first Command*, in respect of its *Extent* (as the *Summary* of all *Second-Table Duties*) in respect of the *stress* God lays upon it, and because 'tis the genuine *issue* and *product* of *Divine Love*.

I then came to the *Application* of this Subject: And here,

I. Hence we may infer the infinite *Goodness* of God, that so admirably shines out in this *Law*, and in the eminent *Character* given here of it.

II. Hence we may infer the vast *Importance* of this *Command*, and how much it deserves our *attentive Consideration* and conscientious *Care* in the *Practice* of it.

III. If to love our *Neighbour*, &c. be a *Command* like the *first* and *greatest*; then we may infer, *How hainous a Sin* that narrow *Selfishness* is, which is so *Opposite* to the *impartial Love* we shou'd bear to others.

And alas, little do the generality of Men, nay of profess'd Christians themselves, consider the comprehensive *Malignity* of this *Sin*, which is so *Universal*.

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And no wonder when he has the same *Principle* prevalent in him, from whence the grossest *Acts of Murder, Revenge, Theft, Injustice, Perjuries, &c.* Flow; and which wou'd hurry him to the *Commission* of 'em, if he were not more powerfully *restrain'd* by the *fear of humane Laws* than by his *own Inclination*. O what need have such then to get this *Root of Bitterness* Extirpated, this fundamental *Corruption Subdued*, this spreading *Malady and Plague healed*! We shou'd justly conclude our Case *dangerous*, if our Hearts were devoy'd of the *Love of God*. But 'tis no less *dangerous* while thro' the prevalency of *self-Love*; we do not unfeignedly *Love our Neighbour as our selves*.

Nay what reason have we all to watch against the *remains* of this Sin, which stick so close to all of us! For these *Reliques of Passion and Pride*, of uncharitable *Censures and Animosities of Emulation and Envy*, and of *inordinate self seeking*, which too visibly discover themselves (I fear I may too truly say) in many otherwise eminently *Pious and Good Men*, plainly tell us, that this Sin tho' *subdued*, is not quite *Extirpated*; and that

Serm. II. *our Neighbour.* 387

that tho' they do *sincerely* comply with this Command, of *loving their Neighbour as themselves*, 'tis but yet in an *imperfect Degree and Measure*. But,

IV. This Subject shou'd therefore put us on serious *Reflections* on our selves, *whether we do in compliance with this important Command, love our Neighbour as our selves*.

And here we have great occasion to descend into our own Hearts, and observe the most secret *Workings and Motions* of 'em towards our *Neighbour*. 'Tis comparatively a far easier matter so to regulate our *Language and External Behaviour* towards others, as that it shall not grossly contradict this excellent Precept. The *Law of Civility and Kindness* may be found in our *Lips*, and our *Carriage* may have a plausible appearance of *Amity* towards our Neighbour, when our *Heart* is not *rightly affected* towards him, and we our selves shou'd blush if he were conscious to our inward Thoughts and Disposition; if he cou'd see all our contemptuous Apprehensions of him; all our secret *Envyings* of his External Prosperity and Success, nay of his *Graces and Gifts*, all our *inordinate Desires*

of what he Enjoys; nay all our sinister intentions of advancing our Interest to the Prejudice of his Right. But we shou'd duly consider, that God is conscious to all the secrets of our Hearts, and takes notice of these *inward Deviations* from his Holy Law. O let us then diligently enquire into these unobserved *Actings* of our own Hearts, whether we instead of *Envy*ing the good of others, on the contrary truly *Desire* it, and heartily *Re-joyce* in it, as in our *own*? Whether we are *inclin'd* and *ready* according to the *Opportunities* that offer, to promote their Temporal or Spiritual Welfare with the like affectionate Concern and Industry as we wou'd our *own*?

But because the prosecution of this use of Tryal, wou'd lead me to insist on all the particular *Instances* of Love to our *Neighbour*, I shall rather refer it to your own Meditation, for which you will find proper *Heads* suggested in the next *Use*, viz.

V. Hence I wou'd *Exhort* all of you to the conscientious *Practice* of this *Duty*, Of *loving your Neighbour as your selves*.

And

Serm. II. *our Neighbour.* 389

And here I shall be oblig'd to lay before you the chief particular *Duties* that are included in this *general and comprehensive One*.

And,

I. Let us *impartially Esteem and Value* what we behold of *amiable Goodness* in *others*, as we do what we discern in *our selves*.

For all *Love* supposes some *Excellency* we behold in the *object Lov'd*; and so far as we despise our *Neighbour* we do not *love him*. *He that despiseth his Neighbour Sinneth* (saith the *Wise Man*, Prov. 14. 21.) And particularly by violating this grand Law of *Love*. For indeed *no Man* shou'd appear wholly *contemptible* to us. We may in *every one* see what ought to attract our *Esteem and Affection*. There's none but we may behold in 'em the beautiful *Image* of *God* enstamp't on their *rational Nature*. There is in every *Man* a *Heaven-born Spirit*, resembling the *Father of Spirits*, and the *Inspiration of the Almighty* hath given him *Understanding*, Job. 32. 8. Every *Man* is the *Workmanship and Off-spring* of *God*, as well

as our selves. He that made us in the Womb made them, and 'twas one that Fashion'd both there. (As Job speaks of his Servants whom on that account he saith he durst not Despise, Job, 31. 13, 14. 15.) Every Man hath the same natural Faculties and Powers, and is thereby capable of being restor'd to the moral holy Image of God, and of being for ever happy in the Enjoyment of him. Every one that we converse with is under the same offers of Pardon and Salvation thro' the Blood of the great Redeemer, that are made unto our selves. So that that Question may well be put to us, *Why dost thou set at nought thy Brother?* Rom. 14. 10. Do's he want those Riches and Honours which thou Posselt? Or is he destitute of those excellent Abilities and Endowments of Mind that thou art Adorned with? To what canst thou ascribe this, but to the distinguishing Providence and Favour of God, which might have given him the same Advantage above Thee? Nay, what tho' at present his Wickedness it self do's render him so far most justly Vile and Hateful; yet as it do's not deprive him of the natural Image of God, so

so his renewing Grace can recover him from these odious Deformities. It can make him a *Vessel of Mercy and Honour*, and put a noble heavenly Stamp upon him.

And as we shou'd on such accounts *esteem every Man*, looking on none as despicable and below our Consideration and Regard; so we shou'd much more *Esteem those* in whom brighter rays of God's amiable Glory Shine. Wherever we behold the glorious Effects of his sanctifying Grace in an *eminent Degree*, they must *proportionably* Attract our affectionate Veneration. We must honour *all Men*, but especially *those* in whom there appears most of a God-like Temper and Disposition; and in whom we may discern the most illustrious Imitations of the Divine Life. Our love must *impartially* in honour prefer *those* above our *selves*, whom the *Providence or Grace* of God has confer'd more of *civil*, or of *spiritual Dignity and Excellency* upon.

2. Let us *be inwardly affected towards the Good and Welfare of our Neighbour*, as we are towards our own.

Particularly,

Let us as sincerely *desire* and *wish* it as we do *our own*.

Love necessarily implies *Good-will* to the *Person* we *Love*, and consequently makes us *desire* his real *Felicity* and *well-Being*.

So shou'd our *Love to others* vent it self in our cordial *Wishes* of their temporal Prosperity (so far as 'tis truly best for 'em) and especially of their Eternal Happiness. It shou'd prompt us according to *Apostle's Direction* to *pray for all Men*, in imitation of the Benignity and Good-will of that gracious God, who wou'd have all Men to be saved and come to the Knowledge of the Truth, 1 Tim. 2, 3. Nay it shou'd prompt us in conformity to the truly *Divine Charity* of our dying Saviour, to *pray for our very Enemies themselves*, even for those that *despightfully Use and Persecute us*, Mat. 5. 44. Our sincere and enlarg'd Affection to all Men shou'd bear a true Correspondence to the strain of that Prayer that our Lord hath Taught us, *Our Father*, &c. And accordingly shou'd make us offer up our Petitions for the

the *Conversion* of the *Infidel*, and the *Reformation* of the *Christian World*, with the like ardour and importunity in our devout *Desires*, as we offer up any requests for our *own Souls*, and their *final Salvation*. For the *Salvation* of *others* shou'd be dear to us as our *own*, and consequently the *Object* of our *Fervent Desires*. See Rom. 10. 1.

Let our Love prompt us to *Rejoyce heartily in the Welfare and Good of others as in our own*.

And so we shall certainly do, if we unfeignedly *Desire* it. While others behold the external *Prosperity* of their *Neighbour* with an *Envious*, let us behold it with a *pleased Eye* and *Heart*, relishing the like *Satisfaction* in it as we do in our own. The flourishing *State* of *publick Societies*, and of *particular Persons* shou'd be to our charitable *Souls* a most grateful and agreeable *Spectacle*. So that as *one Member* do's in some degree feel the *Ease* that *another* Enjoys; so shou'd we (tho' we cannot relish a *sensible*) yet find a *rational* complacency and *Satisfaction* in the good of others; and according to the *Apostle's Exhortation*

tation, *Rejoyce with them that Rejoyce*, Rom. 12. 15. But especially we shou'd take a higher Pleasure in beholding the spiritual Good and Welfare of others.

If the *Conversion of a Sinner* administer matter of Joy to the *Heavenly Inhabitants*, we shou'd as cordially congratulate it here on *Earth*. Nay our Eye shou'd not be offended with the *Lustre of the Gifts and Graces* of others, even tho' they excel, and may seem to *Obscure* our own. On the contrary we shou'd view 'em with the like Approbation and Pleasure as if they were *our own*. The delight that redounds to us from the Welfare of others, shou'd make us ready on all occasions to conspire with 'em in their *Thanksgivings* and *Praises* for the *Mercies* they receive, and resent the *Favours* confer'd on them who are our Brethren, as particular *Obligations* on our selves. For so the Apostle requires, *That* we shou'd offer our *Thanks* as well as *Prayers* for all Men, 1 Tim. 2. 1. And we may see the Language of their *Epistles* conformable to this excellent *Precept*. Nature prompts us to resent the *Benefits* confer'd on our *Relations* with grateful Satisfaction; so shou'd

Grace

Serm. II: *our Neighbour:* 395

Grace by enlarging our Love prompt us to resent the *Mercies* of God to *Man-kind* in general, and to *publick Societies, Nations or Churches*, nay to *particular Persons* with *Thankfulness and Joy*.

Let our *Love* also dispose us to *condole the Afflictions and Miseries of others*, as *unfeignedly as we do our own*.

We cannot indeed have that *sensitive Perception* of 'em as of our own. But as we may take a rational Estimate of the Greatness of 'em; so our Love shou'd prompt us to a suitable Sympathy with 'em. And therefore we are as truly required to *Weep with them that Weep*, as to *Rejoyce with them that Rejoyce*, Rom. 12. 15. We shou'd so far resent the Case of others which we see or hear of as our own, as not to be *insensible* of their *Calamities and Grievs*. We shou'd as the Apostle speaks, *Remember those that are in Bonds as Bound with 'em*; and *them that suffer Adversity, as being our selves in the Body*, Heb 13 3. The deplorable *Objects* of human Misery which we behold, or the *Tidings* of it which we hear, shou'd deeply affect our Hearts, and move the Bowels of our Compassion towards our suffering fellow-

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low-Creatures. 'Tis one instance that Job produces of his Integrity, *That he wept for him that was in trouble; and his Soul was grieved for the Poor,* Job 30. 25. And David mentions it as the Instance of his *unfeigned Charity*, that when those who had dealt most ungratefully with him were sick, *his cloathing was sack-cloth, he afflicted his soul with fasting; He behaved himself as tho' it had been his Friend or Brother, and bowed down heavily as one that mourns for his Mother,* Ps. 35. 12, &c. But especially shou'd we resent the *spiritual Evils* that others labour under, or are in imminent Danger of. The perverse *Blindness* of the *Infidel World*; the woful *Corruptions* of the greatest part of the *Christian Church*; the *Sufferings* or *Declensions* of the *Reformed Churches* themselves; the daring *Insolence* and *Impenitency* of profligate Sinners; the shameful *Falls* of professed Christians, and the woful *decays* of Piety too visible among the best, shou'd even pierce our Hearts with grief, and often draw compassionate Tears from our Eyes, in our serious Contemplation of it. With what heaviness and continual Sorrow of Heart

Serm. II *our Neighbour.* 397

Hear did the pious Apostle Paul re-
 sent the perverse *Unbelief* of the *Jews*,
 even to that Degree as extorted from him
 that unusual Strain of Charity, *I cou'd*
wish that my self were accursed from
Christ for my Brethren, my Kinsmen
according to the Flesh, Rom. 9. 3. How
 strongly did even the Mis-carriages of
 professed Christians rouch and wound
 his Heart; *Who is weak, and I am not*
weak; who is Offended (i. e. made to
Stumble and Fall) and I Burn not? 2
 Cor. 11. 29. But especially, how did
 the Divine Charity of our *Blessed Savi-*
our appear in this Instance or as a *Pat-*
tern for our Imitation! How sensibly
 did he resent that *Curse* of *Mortality*
 that Sin had brought on human Nature
 in his *Weeping over the Grave of La-*
zarus! John 11. 33. 35. How ready
 were the Bowels of his Compassion to
 yearn over any miserable *Objects* that
 came in his way! Mat. 14. 14. Luk. 7.
 13. Mark 1. 41. Mat. 20. 34. How
 strongly were they mov'd towards the
Multitude, when he beheld 'em scatter'd
 abroad as *Sheep without a Shepherd*:
 Mat. 9. 36. With how bitter Grief did
 he resent the *hardness of Heart* that he
 found

found in obstinate Sinners ! Mark 3. 5. What a *Flood of Tears* did he shed over *Jerusalem*, when he consider'd their present *Security* and *Impenitency*, and *foresaw* their *approaching Ruin* ! Luke 19. 41. Thus shou'd Christian Charity give us a tender *Fellow-feeling* of others *Miseries*, and enable us to put on *Bowels of Pity and Tenderneß* towards 'em, 1 Pet. 3. 8. Phil. 2. 1. Even tho' our own condition be *Prosperous*, yet the spectacles of grief and woe we are surrounded with, shou'd allay our Joys, and render this *Earth* to us while we converse in it, a *Vale of Tears*.

But,

3. Our Love to our Neighbour must appear in our care to avoy'd the doing him the least *Injury and Wrong*; and in our readiness to do him all the good we have an *Ability and Call* unto.

Our Love to our Neighbour must appear in our care to avoy'd the doing him the least *Injury*.

He that Loves his Neighbour as himself, will be as fearful of *wronging* or *hurting* him, as of doing so to himself. *Charity thinks no Evil*. It do's not me-
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ditate or *plot* any Evil against our Neighbour. It shou'd make us as tender of *injuring* his *Reputation* by *unjust Censures* or *Calumnies*, or by rashly *spreading* or *receiving* groundless *evil-Reports*, as we wou'd be of *blasting* our own. It shou'd as effectually restrain us from doing any thing wrongfully to the *Damage* and *Prejudice* of his just *Interests* and *Rights*, as if they were our own. It shou'd make us as fearful of doing any thing to counteract his lawful *Designs*, or cross his just *Pretensions*, or blast the *Success* of his honest *Endeavours*, as we wou'd be of *obstructing* our own *Affairs*. We shou'd no more offer any violence to his *Person*, or his *Property*, then to *our own*.

But our Love must not rest here in bare *Negatives*, in *doing no ill* to our *Neighbour*, it must appear farther, in *our Readiness* to do him all the good we have an *Ability* for, and Call unto.

I add this *Limitation*.

Because (as I observ'd before) our *Power* of doing good is but *finite* and *narrow*; and the providence of God has by the *Relations* wherein we are plac'd

plac'd in a great measure *Limited* the *Stated* and *Ordinary* Exercises of it, tho' not *excluding occasional Objects* that are presented to us. We must first extend our *beneficent Love* to those that are under our immediate Care; and whom Providence has plac'd in a Dependence thereon. But yet it must not be so *confin'd* unto them as to hinder us as we have an Opportunity from *doing good to all* we converse with, especially to them *that are of the Household of Faith*, Gal. 6. 10. And we shou'd when such proper *Objects* and *Occasions* of Charity occur, promote the good of *others*, with the like cordial *Affection* and *Zeal* as we wou'd our *own*. We must not content our selves with giving our Neighbour a few *good Wishes* or *good Words* that cost us nothing, when 'tis in our power to express our Love by more substantial and solid Proofs of it. *We must love in Deed and in Truth*, 1 John 3. 8. We must not put off our *starving Brethren* with an empty Compliment of, *Be ye warmed, be ye Cloathed*, when we are capable to *minister* to their pressing Necessities, James 2. 15, 16. *Love is a busy and active*, 'tis a

communicative and diffusive Principle,
 and will therefore render us *liberal Benefactors* to others in proportion to our
 real Abilities. It will open our *Purses*
 to the relief of the *Indigent*; it will
 open our *Houses* to the Entertainment
 of the *destitute Stranger*; it will open
 our *Lips* and our *Hearts* for the *Instru-*
ction of the *Ignorant*, for the *advising*
the Weak, *resolving the Doubtful*, *war-*
ning the Impenitent, *comforting the Sor-*
rowful and Afflicted, and reconciling
 the differences of others; it will make
 us (according to our Advantages) *Rich*
in good Works, *forward to Contribute*
 what lies in our power to promote the
 present or Eternal Welfare of others.
 This Divine Principle shou'd render us
 zealous *Imitators* and *Followers* of our
 Blessed Master who *went about doing*
Good, and whose whole Life was (as it
 were) one continued Act of beneficent
 pity to the Bodies and the Souls of Men.
 How studious shou'd especially all that
 are *Rich and Powerful* be of acting up
 to that excellent Character that *Job* gives
 of himself in the Vindication of his
 own Integrity: *Job. 29. 12, 13, 14,*
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Fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the *V*Widow's Heart to sing for Joy. I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame. I was a Father to the Poor, and the Cause that I knew not, I searched out; And I brake the Jaws of the *V*Vicked, and plucked the Spoyl out of his Teeth. And elsewhere, If I have beld the Poor from their Desire, or caused the Eyes of the *V*Widow to fail; or have eaten my Morsel my self alone, and the Fatherless have not eaten thereof. If I have seen any perish for want of Cloathing, or any poor without Covering. The Stranger did not lodge in the Streets, and I opened my Door to the Traveller, Job. 32. 16, &c. But especially shou'd our Love extend to the precious Souls of others, and prompt us to the most zealous Endeavours of using the most likely and sutable means in our power to promote their Salvation, even with the like Affectionate concern as we wou'd our own.

4. Our Love to our Neighbour shou'd appear in all Acts of Seif-denyal and
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Serm. II. *our Neighbour.* 403

Condescension which his greater Good do's require and call for.

We then truly *Love him as our selves*, when we can stoop to the *meanest Offices of Kindness*, and even *counteract our own Interest* when it stands in the way of some *higher Interest* of his. And yet even this *Christian Love* shoud prompt us to. How eminent an *Example* were the *Apostles* of this in that truly noble *Charity* they express'd to the *Souls of Men*! How entirely did they *renounce all temporal Advantages* to promote the *spiritual Velfare* of others, *becoming Poor*, to make them *spiritually Rich*! How much more did they *Renounce their flesbly Ease* by exposing themselves to *unwearied and painful Labours*! How freely did they disclaim their *Liberty*, and even embrace the most *ignominious Bonds*! How cheerfully did they venture upon grievous *Hardships* and terrible *Sufferings*! How unconcernedly did they *suffer Shame and Reproach*! With what undaunted courage did they hazard the most valuable of all *Earthly Enjoyments, Life it self* and all from a fervent Desire to promote the *Salvation of Souls*:

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And some parallel Effects shou'd true Christian Love produce in us. It shou'd prompt us not to seek so much our own Profit, as the more valuable profit of others, especially the gaining and saving their Souls, 1 Cor. 10. 24. It shou'd make us look not so much at our own Things, as at those of others, Phil. 12. 4. It shou'd engage us to prefer the publick Good before our own, and even cheerfully to Sacrifice our inconsiderable bodily Interest (our Ease or Reputation, our Estate or Health, nay our Life it self) when any more valuable Interest of the Welfare of the Church or God may render it Necessary. And hence the Apostle John mentions this as one Instance of our Love to the Brethren, even our laying down our Life for 'em, 1 John 3. 16. We shou'd by Love be ready to serve one another, Gal. 5. 13. Not disdaining to submit to any Act of beneficent kindness towards the meanest of our Brethren. We shou'd imitate those truly charitable Spirits Above, who tho' they have the Honour of beholding the Face of our Heavenly Father, yet think it not beneath 'em to be ministering Spirits to the Heirs of Salvation.

vation here below: Much more shou'd we imitate that Diviner *Charity* of our *Blessed Saviour*, who became poor to enrich us, who disdain'd not to wash the Feet of his *Disciples*; who freely stoop'd to the lowest degree of *Abasement* and *Misery*, to advance us to the highest *Dignity* and *Happiness*.

But that I may not go beyond the bounds of this Discourse, I shall only briefly mention a few more particulars wherein our *Christian Love* shou'd express it self.

Our *Loving our Neighbour as ourselves* shou'd appear in pleasing him for his Good, and to his Edification, Rom.

15. 2. And that in conformity to our *Blessed Saviour* who pleased not himself,

v. 3. Our *Love* shou'd render us easily accessible to all, ready to comply with the various tempers of Men so far as is consistent with Duty and Discretion, and willing to entertain all friendly Correspondence, and interchange all kind Offices with 'em. It shou'd oblige us to all Candour and Courtesy in our Converse with 'em, and that appearing in our serene Looks, in our gracious Words, and

in our obliging and inoffensive Behaviour. For Charity do's not behave it self unseemly, 1 Cor. 13. 5.

Our Loving our Neighbour as our selves shou'd restrain all motions of unruly Anger, and prompt us to a ready forgiveness of Injuries and Wrongs. Even as we do not usually retain any lasting Anger against, but very easily forgive our selves.

Charity (saith the Apostle) is not easily provoked.

It suffers long, it endureth all Things, 1 Cor. 13. 5, 4, 7. Nay it covers all Things, v. 7. i. e. All matters of Offence. Love is a pure Heavenly Flame, that shou'd extinguish in our Breasts that dark Fire of immoderate Passion that's kindled from beneath. It shou'd prompt us to walk in all meekness and long-Suffering, forbearing one another, Eph. 4. 1, 2. It shou'd banish all Bitterness and Wrath, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, Eph 4. 31. It shou'd make us imitate the forgiving Disposition of our Blessed Saviour, Eph. 4. 32. It shou'd render us kind to one another, tender-Hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us, 1 Theff. 5. 15. It

Serm. II. *our Neighbour.* 407

It shou'd make us studious of *Concord and Peace*; and in order thereto, of *unanimity in Judgment and Practice*, so far as we can attain it; and in matters wherein some *difference is unavoidable* in this imperfect State of *mutual Forbearance*. It shou'd prompt us to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, and to confine our Christian Love within no narrower limits than that of the true *Catholick Church*, extending it to *all that Love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*. Love shou'd prompt us to a charitable construction of the *Words and Actions* of our *Neighbour*. It doth *not think (or impute) Evil*, without cogent and necessitating evidence of Guilt, 1 Cor. 13. 5. It *rather hopes and believeth all Things*, where there is any probable ground to conclude our *Neighbour* to be innocent of what he may be charg'd with. Nay *Love shou'd prompt us to bear with the Infirmities of others*, and to make such compassionate *Allowances* for the frailty of human Nature, as we readily expect shou'd be made in our own Case, Rom. 15. 3.

Of so vast and comprehensive Extent is this *Duty*, that a due compliance with this *Precept* wou'd regulate the whole of our Behaviour towards our *Neighbour*. And O that we cou'd behold a more accurate Conformity in the Lives of professed Christians to this excellent Rule of our Holy Religion! How soon wou'd the Face both of civil and sacred Societies be admirably chang'd! How soon wou'd a large diffusion of this Heavenly Temper bring down much of *Heaven* upon this *Earth*! Nay how much of *Heaven* wou'd descend therewith into our *Hearts*, to prepare us for the Happiness of that Blessed Society that are cemented in perfect *Love to God*, and *Love to one another*!

But

As this *Duty* is so Important in it self, and considering the woful Depravation of our Nature, so difficult at first to be thoroughly Practic'd; so to lay before you the manifold *Motives* thereto, drawn from the *Equity* and *Reasonableness* of the *Duty* it self, from
it's

Serm.II. *our Neighbour.* 409

it's *conduciveness* to the Glory of God,
to the *welfare* of *Publick Societies*, as
well as to *our own*, &c. will take up
and very justly, a distinct *Discourse*.

Our Neighbour

S E R M O N

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verf. 39. 40.

Verf. 39. *And the second is like
to it; Thou shalt love thy Neigh-
bour as thy self.*

F I N I S

40. *On these two Command-
ments hang all the Law and the
Prophets.*

it's conductance to the Glory of God,
to the relief of Publick Distresses, as
well as to our own, &c. will take up
and very justly, a distinct Discourse.

And now we have seen the
Necessity of this Duty, and how
it is to be performed, we shall
now consider the Reasons why
it is so necessary, and how
it is to be performed. The first
Reason is, that it is a Duty
of the highest Importance, and
one which is necessary to the
well-being of the whole Society.

The second Reason is, that it
is a Duty which is necessary to
the well-being of the whole
Society, and one which is
necessary to the well-being of
the whole Society. The third
Reason is, that it is a Duty
which is necessary to the well-being
of the whole Society, and one
which is necessary to the well-being
of the whole Society.

F 139 NON 2

As this Duty is so necessary, and
one which is necessary to the
well-being of the whole Society,
it is necessary that we should
perform it with the utmost
care and diligence. We should
not only perform it, but we
should perform it in the best
manner possible. We should
not only perform it, but we
should perform it in the best
manner possible. We should
not only perform it, but we
should perform it in the best
manner possible.

On Love to
Our Neighbour.



SERM. III.

MATT. Chap. XXII.

Verf. 39, 40.

Verf. 39. *And the second is like to it; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

40. *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

I Have already explained this comprehensive Summary of the Second Table, Thou shalt Lovethy Neighbour as thy self. I have also shewn, on what accounts our Lord asserts, That 'tis like to the first and great Command, of Loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, &c.

In the Application I inferr'd the admirable Condescension and Goodness of God, appearing both in this Command it self, and in the Character here given of it. I farther inferr'd the hainousness of the contrary, comprehensive Sin of inordinate self-Love that excludes this Love to our Neighbour. I then urg'd all of you to Enquire, how far you comply with this important Command. And I exhorted all of you to the practice of it, by setting before you the principal Instances wherein you must shew, that you do thus Love your Neighbour as your selves.

I come now in the last Place to urge the practice of this excellent Duty upon you. And because 'tis a Duty that appears at first difficult to our depraved Nature, and in the conscientious Practice of

Serm. III. *our Neighbour.* 413

of it we must be oblig'd to counteract the common course of the World (the generality of whom are so deeply sunk into *inordinate Self-Love*). I shall the more enlarge on the *Recommending* it to you, by several *Considerations* and *Arguments* which the Scriptures Suggest, and which if duly weigh'd, will powerfully *Excite* us to it.

And these *Arguments* may be drawn, Partly from the *Authority of God* commanding this Duty upon us.

Partly, from the *Equity and Reasonableness of the Duty* itself.

Partly, from the *beneficial* firmness of it, and *Reason* from it, both to *publick Societies*, and to *particular Persons*.

Partly, from the *excellent Examples* of it, which are highly oblig'd to the *imitation* of us.

I shall enforce upon you the *Practise* of this Duty, of *Loving your Neighbour as your self*, from the *consideration of God's Authority* that *command* it.

And indeed the *Veneration* we owe to that *sovereign Majesty*, should be a sufficient *Argument* to engage us to the *religious Observance* of every *Command*.

mand, that bears the stamp of his awful Authority. Much more shou'd it induce us to a careful Compliance with those *Commands* on which he himself lays a *peculiar stress*, and as it were sets a mark of *distinguishing Respect* upon. What he himself ranks among the *[^{the} ~~more~~ ~~weightier~~ ~~things~~ ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~law~~]* the *Weightier Things of his Law*, we shou'd be more eminently studious to *Know and Observe*. And tho' none of the *minutest* of his Precepts must be *Neglected*; yet these *great Commands* of all others, must not be *left undone*. Now I have already shewn you, that the Blessed God has so peculiar a regard to this Precept that he places it next to the *first and greatest* of *Loving himself with all our Heart*, &c. and pronounces it to be *like unto it*. Nay he speaks of it *as the fulfilling of his Law*, i. e. as to one *Table* of it. So that if we make Conscience of any Duty in Religion, we shou'd of this; if we would in any instance of Obedience, comply with his Law, we must in this, which he expresses himself so highly concerned for. We cannot therefore fail of *Loving our Neighbour as our selves*, without manifesting the highest dif-

Serm. III. *our Neighbour.* 415

Dis-respect to the blessed God himself by our Violation and Contempt of one of his most important Commands. We cannot refuse our *fellow-Creatures*, this eminent degree of our Affection without dethroning *him* in our Hearts by a perverse Opposition of our Will to this considerable Instance of his *good and perfect Will*. And sure this Argument shou'd be of great Weight with all those with whom the Authority of God is Sacred and Inviolable; especially when we consider, that the great God will measure the sincerity of our Obedience by our particular regard to this Comprehensive Precept; so that our being *accepted or rejected* by him here, and our *final Sentence* that will adjudge us to endless Happiness or Misery, depends upon our sincere Observance of it. See to this purpose the Account which our Saviour gives us of the solemn Process of the final Judgment, and the Reasons he assigns of the *different Dooms* past on the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, which are drawn from their having performed or neglected the genuine Instances of this *God-like Love*, which I am recommending.

ing to you. But of that more may occur under another Head.

II. This Argument drawn from the Authority of God will be the more forcible if we farther consider, *The Equity and Reasonableness, the Excellency and Amiability of the Duty it self.*

First, For the Equity and Reasonableness of it, it will appear upon these two Considerations.

1. *We our selves desire and expect this degree and measure of Love from others, and therefore shou'd pay it unto them.*

For the Equity of that Rule of our Blessed Saviour's is manifest, that *what we shou'd that others do unto us, that we shou'd do unto them; and what we wou'd not that others do to us, we shou'd not do to them,* i. e. Supposing our own Desires in respect of others Regular and Just.

Now we are conscious to our selves, that we look for such Love as this from others. We expect they shou'd value and esteem us according to our real Worth and Excellency. We wou'd have 'em to be affected with our Concerns and Interests, as if they were *their own*: we expect

Serm. III. *our Neighbour.* 347

expect that they shou'd *wish* our Welfare and *rejoyce* in it, and readily *em-
plove* any Opportunity of *promoting* it. We look for *pay* under our *Afflictions* and *Miseries*, for *Relief* and *supply* of our pressing *Necessities* and *Wants* from those that are capable of *Ministring* to 'em. We think it most reasonable that they shou'd consider *our* case as if it were *theirown*. And are therefore prone to complain of *Inhumanity* and *Unmercifulness*, or at least *unkindness* and want of *Love*, if our expectations in these Instances be not complied with.

Shou'd we not then *turn the Tables*, and even make our own Conscience the impartial *Arbitrator* to determine and adjust the *Degree* and *Measure* of *Affection* we owe to others. Shou'd we not consider, that they expect as much *from us* in the like Circumstances. And that *their* Expectations are altogether as reasonable as *ours*. So that it wou'd argue gross *partiality* in us to deny them such solid Instances, and substantial Proofs of our beneficent Love, as we, if in their Case, shou'd think we had a reasonable Claim unto. This were to weigh *our Rights* and *theirs* in very unequal Scales

Scales, and to demand that *Measure* of Love from others that we refuse to mete unto 'em ; which is apparent *Injustice* and *Inequality*.

But the *Equity* and *Reasonableness* of this Duty will farther appear if we consider.

2. *Our Neighbour is in many respects as our selves, and therefore we shou'd Love him as we do our selves*

'Tis no way unusual to see Men's Affections so strongly cemented by the *bands* of *natural Relation*, or even those that are founded on *voluntary Contract*, that their *Relations* are to 'em even as *themselves*, and the Effects of their Love to 'em seem rather to *Exceed*, than *fall short* of those they show to themselves. Even *Friendship* itself founded upon likeness of Temper, do's so knit their Hearts, that the Scripture uses this Language to Express it, *Thy Friend that is as thy own Soul*, Deut. 13. 6.

Now to *enlarge* our Love (which is the grand Design of this excellent Precept) we shou'd consider how *nearly Ally'd* our *Neighbour* is to us ; how far he is the *same* with our selves, and therefore shou'd be to us in point of dearness and affection *as our own Souls*. Do's

Do's it so strangely endear *Relations* to one another that they are of the same *Parentage* and *Family*? And shou'd it not as truly endear every Man to us, that we are all *made of one Blood*; that we are all descended from the same *Stock*; that we are all Branches sprung from one common Root, being the *race* of the same *first Parents*? Nay we are all *related* to our Heavenly *Father* as his Offspring; our *Bodies* being form'd by his Power, and our *Spirits* breathed into 'em by him the *Father of Spirits*.

Is a *likeness in Temper and Disposition* or a *conjunction in secular Designs and Interests* often the Foundation of so strong an Affection among Men? How shou'd the like *Considerations* entitle every Man to an eminent Degree of our Love! For if we regard him either in respect of his *Body* or *Soul*, he is as it were a living *Image* and *Picture* of our selves. His *Body* is by the Hand of the same Divine Artist form'd and fashion'd like *our's*. His *Soul* is endued with the same noble Faculties, and consequently capable of the like excellent natural Endowments, or of the same Gracious and God-like Qualities; nay of the same Heavenly

Perfection and Bliss as *ours*. There is no other difference between our *Neighbour* and *our selves*, but what either refers to our *external Circumstances* (which are ordered by the distinguishing Providence of God, that cou'd have appointed him the same Lot with us, or us with him) or in respect of our *internal Qualifications*; and as to those, all our *natural* or *acquired Endowments* are chiefly the *Gifts* of God; and all our *Holy* and *heavenly Dispositions* are much more eminently the Effects of his distinguishing Grace. But still in respect of his *reasonable Nature*, and the excellent *Powers* thereof, he is the same with *our selves*; and therefore our *Love* shou'd on all those accounts prompt us to have the like regard to him, and concern for his *Welfare* as for our own.

And how much more shou'd we thus Love our *fellow-Christians* as our selves? For in *them* we behold not only the same *reasonable*, but even the same *Divine* or *God-like Nature* as in our selves. In *them* not only the same *Natural*, but the same *Moral* and *holy Image* of God shines. They stand related to each other by the same *Divine Extraction* and
Birth,

Serm.III. *our Neighbour.* 421

Birth, by the same *Heavenly Original* and *Descent*. They are *Subjects* of the same *Kingdom* of God and Christ; nay they are in point of *Interest* Members of the same *civil Society*, or at least of the same *Society of Mankind* with our selves. They are listed as *Soldiers* in the same *spiritual Warfare* against the same pernicious Enemies. They are most nearly *united* and *combin'd* in the same *spiritual Work and Exercises*, in the same *Labours*, and often in the same *Sufferings*, and always in the prosecution of the same grand *Interest* and *Design*; and in the same *Divine Faith* and *Hope*, as to the glorious Issue thereof. How much more then shou'd every *fellow-Christian* be dear to us, even *as our own Soul*! How justly may all such account themselves *one* in God and Christ (the grand Centre of their *Unity*) and how reasonable is it then they shou'd be *one* in *Heart* and *Affection*!

But farther: As this *Duty* carries so much of *Equity* and *Reasonableness*, so,

Secondly, It has no less of *Amiability* and *Excellency* enstamp't upon it.

'Tis one of those *Things* of which the Apostle Paul saith, *They are Lovely*,

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Serm.III. *our Neighbour.* 421

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and of good Report, Phil. 4. 8. An enlarged *Charity* do's truly ennoble our Nature, and adorn our Conversation, attracting the Eye and Admiration of all that behold it by it's native Beauty and Lustre. A *diffusive Goodness* and Love carries the most irresistable Charms with it, to all that see it, or at least to all that feel the beneficial Warmth of it.

Other *Endowments* how glorious soever, when seperated from this, render those that are possess'd of 'em, rather *Terrible* than *Amiable*, and more the *Objects* of our *Fear* than our *Love*. *Fallen Angels* (as one well observes) have a very eminent measure of *Power* and *Subtilty*, but yet are rather *Hateful* than *Lovely*, because devoyd of *Heavenly Goodness*, and possess'd with the contrary *Hellish* and *Hurtful Malignity*. Whereas 'tis this renders the B. God so perfectly and most deservedly *Amiable*, that in him infinite *Power* and *Wisdom* is as it were tempered by immense and boundless *Love*. And accordingly, the more *Extensive* and *Universal* our *Love* is, the more we resemble that blessed Being in one of the most *Bright* and *Glorious* of all his imitable Excellencies

Serm. III. *our Neighbour.* 423

cies. No Man was a more beautiful living Image of the *Invisible God* than our *Blessed Saviour*. And in nothing was he more eminently so than in that *enlarged Charity* that made him continually *go about doing Good* : As if his whole Life was one continued Act of Compassion and Love, either to the *Bodies* or the *Souls* of Men. And the more like we are to him in the *Extent* of our *Love*, the more we do approve our selves to be the *Children of our Heavenly Father*, by this illustrious *Lineament* and *Stroke* of the Divine Image. He that is inspir'd with *universal Love* to others (even proportion'd to that he bears to himself) is in his daily Actions, and at least in his Wishes, a general *Benefactor* to Mankind. He is as a good *Angel* and *Genius* to all he converses with, so forward and free to Minister to 'em ; so industrious and active to promote their Welfare ; so ready to condescend and stoop to any Office of Kindness and Love for their sakes. And who that are not lost to all sense of *Vertue* and true *Honour*, but must admire and esteem such a generous *Lover of Mankind* ! The *Lycaonians* when they beheld

the impotent Man restor'd by *Paul* to the use of his Limbs, cry'd out, *The God's are come down to us in the likeness of Men*, Acts 14. 11. And may not we more justly regard a Man inspir'd with such Divine unbounded *Charity* as a sort of *incarnate Deity*, a *living Image of God* in this lower World. In a word, there is nothing on Earth so justly *Venerable* and *Amiable* as this universal God-like Goodness. As on the contrary, nothing renders a Man so deservedly *Base* and *Despicable* as narrow *Selfishness*; and nothing renders him more *Detestable* than *hurtful Malignity*. He that *hates his Brother* is as an *incarnate Feind* that delights in *Mischief*; or a *Beast of Prey*, that lives upon *Rapine* and *Ravage*, and seizes on whatever comes into his *Paws*. He that *Loves him not*, thro' the *inordinacy of self-Love*, is like the *ordid Hedge-Hog* that wraps himself in his own *Skin*, and turns out his *Prickles* to all others who wou'd come near him. *Selfishness* thus *contracts* the *Soul of Man*, and limits it's activity to the narrow *Sphere of his own private Good*. *Divine Love* wou'd *amplify* and *enlarge* it's activity, to the promotion of the publick

publick Welfare. And sure the latter is as deservedly *Honourable* and *Great*, as the former is justly *Mean* and *Contemptible*.

But of this more anon.

III. I wou'd farther enforcethis *Duty* from the consideration of the *beneficial Fruits* that wou'd redound from it to *publick Societies*, and to *particular Persons*.

First, This *Duty* wou'd have a very *beneficial Influence* upon *publick Societies*.

For indeed nothing cou'd contribute more to the real *Happiness* and *Welfare*, nay to the *Glory* and *Beauty* of *human Societies* whether *Sacred* or *Civil*, than the large diffusion of this *God-like universal Love*. So far as it do's prevail, 'tis the most powerful *Band* and *Cement* of 'em. *Divine Love* prompting us to wish and seek every other Man's well-being as our own, wou'd most effectually crush all that *Hatred* and *Envy*, that violent *Emulation* and *Strife* about secular Honours or Riches, that *Injustice* and *Fraud*, that *Oppression* and *Rigor*, that involve the greatest part of Mankind in

perpetual *Animosities* and *Discords*, *Confusions* and *Broils*, nay often in those bloody *Wars*, that carry with 'em such deplorable Ruins and Desolations. If this one Precept of Christianity were generally observ'd, what an incredible change wou'd appear in the Face of *human Societies* ! How wou'd the amiable *Concord* and *Love* of the Members thereof, their enlarged *Liberality* and *Bounty* ; their ready interchange of all Offices of *Kindness* and *Amity* ; their *mutual Satisfaction* and *Complacency* in each others Welfare, render such *Communities* on *Earth*, a beautiful *Model* of the *concordant Heavenly Society* ! How pleasant wou'd it be to see *Brethren* thus dwell together in *Unity* ! Ps. 133. 1. How wou'd this Divine Principle transform those that are now like *mischievous Fiends*, or like *Savage Beasts* (that are ready to tear all that stand in the way of their Ambition and Interest) not only into *mild* and *innocent*, but even *useful* and *beneficial* Members of those earthly Societies, of which now they are the *Bane* and *Plague* ! If once this generous and heavenly Principle were implanted in their Hearts, they wou'd be so far from

Serm. III. *our Neighbour:* 427

from seeking to enrich themselves to the cost and damage of others, or to aggrandize themselves on the Ruins of the publick Interest, that the *common Good* wou'd be more valuable to 'em than *their own*, and they wou'd freely Sacrifice the *latter* to promote and serve the *former*. And O how happy wou'd *human Societies* be, if all the *Members* thereof were acted by such a *publick Spirit*, and were inspir'd with as cordial a Zeal to advance the welfare of their *fellow-Members* as their *own* ! Whereas the prevalency of the contrary Temper (even of a *narrow Selfishness*) is in such *collective Bodies* what an *Inflammation* or *Tumour* is in the *natural Body*, that draws a superfluous quantity of *Blood* and *Spirits* to one Member or part, to the sensible weakning the rest. 'Tis their most pernicious *Disease*, and a dangerous *Symptom* of their *Ruin* and *Dissolution*. Whereas *Divine Love* by promoting a free and more equal *Circulation* of all secular *Advantages* and *Interests* wou'd consequently promote the *Strength* and *Vigour* of *Earthly Kingdoms* and *States*.

And

And what has been said in reference to Civil, is no less applicable to *sacred Societies*. The state of *Christian Churches* is usually *Flourishing and Prosperous*, or *Declining and Weak*, accordingly as the fervour of *Divine Love* do's *Augment* or *Abate*. When *Charity* grows cold, all other *Graces* usually droop and decay; and as *Animosities* and *Hatred* increase, *Iniquity* abounds. An *Union of Affection* among all those that love our Lord *Jesus* in sincerity, is the *Stability* and *Strength*, the *Glory* and *Ornament* of those *sacred Communities*. Whereas when once the *Band of Catholick Love* that shou'd cement 'em is loosed, *Discord* and *Contention* quickly ensues, and with them *confusion* and every evil work; 'till their woful *Divisions* and *Fractions*, make 'em the *scorn* and *contempt*, and often the easy *Prey* of their malignant *Enemies*. But,

Secondly, This *Duty* wou'd be attended with very *beneficial Fruits* redounding from it to *particular Persons*.

So that 'tis really as much our own *Interest* as our *Duty* to Love our Neighbour as our selves. We shall reap great *Advantages* by it, both in this *present* and in the *future state*. I. We

I. We shall reap great *Advantage* by it *here*, even in this *present State*.

1. I have already suggested to you, That this *God-like Goodness* and *Love* do's truly tend to *ennoble* and *perfect* our *own Nature* by *Conforming* it to the *Divine*. This very *Temper* renders a good Man more *Excellent than his Neighbour*, as being herein far more *like to God*: And sure this shou'd be accounted by us a very valuable *Advantage* and *Benefit*.

2. Again, This *Universal Love* is the most effectual means to conquer the *Enmity* of others, and to interest us in *their Love*.

I need not enlarge in presenting to you the various *Mischiefs* and *Miseries* that spring from a State of *Enmity* with others. And sure nothing can so effectually tend to prevent 'em as the steady constant Exercise of enlarged and beneficent Love. *Who is he that will do you hurt if ye be followers of that which is good?* (or *Imitators of Him that is Good*, as the *Original* may be fitly render'd)

1 Pet. 3. 13. Those must be barbarously wicked indeed that can persist to *hate* him, that takes all possible *Occasi-
on*

ons to *do them good*; that can cherish *rancour* in their Hearts against one that constantly bears and discovers nothing but *Affection* and *Good-will* to them; that can plot mischief against one that not only never wrong'd 'em, but has been ever ready to benefit and oblige 'em.

“ *Charity*, (if any thing) will (as *one*
 “ well speaks) melt the hardest Heart,
 “ and charm the fairest Spirit; it will
 “ bind the most violent Hand, still the
 “ most abusive Tongue, and reconcile
 “ the most prejudic'd and offended
 “ Mind. It cou'd make a revengeful
Esau run into the Embraces of his affectionate Brother *Jacob*; and cause a malicious *Saul* to break out into the most affectionate Resentments of the kindness of *David*, Gen. 32. 20. compar'd with 33. 4. 1 Sam. 24. 16, 17. Sam. 26. 17, 21. So admirably did *Love* triumph over their inveterate *prjudices* and rooted *passions*. Nor do's it only conquer the *Enmity* of others, but usually engages their *Love*, and draws out the beneficial Effects of it when we have most occasion for 'em. A Man noted for *Universal Goodness* and *Love*, can scarce fail of being generally *beloved*, especially by

Serm.III. *our Neighbour.* 431

by all to whom his diffusive Charity has reach'd : So that his *Charity* do's as it were encompass him with *Friends* and *Beneficiaries*, that will be as so many *Guards* of his *Safety*, and *Supports* of his *Interest*.

Who will not be forward to vindicate his Innocence, who has been most tender of the Reputation of others ? Who will not comfort him under his Afflictions, that has shewn a warm Sympathy with others in their Miseries ? Who will refuse to *relieve his Necessities* (shou'd he be reduc'd to any, which at least rarely happens) whose *Heart* and *Hand* have been *open* to supply the Wants of many *others* ? Everyone will think it a common *Duty* and *Interest* to assist such a common *Benefactor* and *Friend* to all.

3. Again this *universal Love* greatly contributes to our *inward Serenity* and *Peace*, *Satisfaction* and *Delight*.

It banishes all those hurtful and boisterous *Passions*, that so often disturb and disquiet, perplex and torment us. *Malice* and *Envy*, *Rancour* and *Revenge* can have no place in a Heart fill'd with *Divine Love*, that prompts it to Wish
and

and Delight in the good of others, and to resent their Miseries with Grief and Sorrow. Nay we cannot easily indulge immoderate *Anger* and *Wrath* against those we sincerely Love. *Enlarged Love* wou'd greatly tend to extinguish that boundless *Ambition* and insatiable *Covetousness* that puts Men on so restless *Toyl*, and anxious Cares to climb above others, or grasp what they Enjoy, or to struggle with 'em as *Competitors* in point of *Worldly Interest*. Nay it shou'd in a great Measure beget in us a *confidence* in others, and remove those *Fears* that result from *Jealousy* and *Distrust*. For a good Man is ready to apprehend himself guarded from any mischievous Assaults of others by the innocence of his own inoffensive and obliging Behaviour towards them. On all these accounts *Divine Love* conduces to the maintaining a constant *Calm*, and chearful *Serenity* in our own Souls, as it frees 'em from the annoyance of such vexatious *Passions* as these are.

Nay this *universal Love* greatly conduces to our *Satisfaction* and *Delight*.

For indeed it does in Effect put us into the *Possession* of whatever *Good* others

thers Enjoy, by enabling us to relish a real and solid Pleasure in it. It does in a very just sense, and to a considerable Degree render the *Welfare of others our own*. 'Tis true, we have not the same *sensitive Perception* of it as they have, but this Divine Principle will enable us to take a rational and real complacency in it. Even as an *affectionate Father* rejoices in the prosperity of his *Children*, or a *Man* in the successes of a *Friend*, as if he himself Enjoy'd what they do. Even so will this *Divine Love* enlarge our Hearts to resent the well-being of any of our Fellow-Creatures, especially the extensive Welfare of publick Societies, with the like Satisfaction that we wou'd our own. *Their Houses and Lands*, their *Treasures and Possessions*, their *Honours and Preferments*, but especially their spiritual *Gifts and Graces* will be to us as *our own*, by administering matter of solid Contentment and Joy to us : And this indeed is the most easy and cheap, the most effectual and commendous, the most innocent and commendable way of *making all the World our own*. And such a *propriety in all things*, and such real comfort redounding

ing

ing thence, no Man can hinder us from or disseize us of. So that whereas 'tis the discontented Language of covetous and envious self-Love. " O that this " House, or Field, or those Herds were " my own ! 'Tis the pleas'd Language of Divine Love, *They are to me as my own*, because they are Enjoy'd by *those I Love*, and in whose *Welfare I truly delight*, as in *my own*. And sure we cannot imagine any Pleasure more refin'd and excellent, and more truly God like than what results from such a noble Exercise of disinterested Love.

This renders us in an eminent Degree like to the Blessed God, who is represented to us as *Rejoycing in his own Works*, and Delighting in the Happiness of his own Creatures. Pf. 104. 31. For this renders the Welfare and Happiness of our Fellow-Creatures a real Accession to our own.

But,

II. The *beneficialness* of Divine Charity will more clearly appear, if we consider the great *Advantages* redounding from it that relate to *our future State*.

For

For *Charity* prompts us to make the best *Improvement* of our present *Talents*, and thereby most effectually secures the *Divine Acceptance* and *Reward*.

Nay it do's greatly *dispose* and *suit* our *Spirits* to the *Blessedness* of the *heavenly State*.

1. This god-like Love prompts us to make the best *Improvement* of all our *present Talents*, in order to our *comfortable Account* of 'em.

Have we any eminent *Gifts* and *Abilities*? Love will prompt us to employ 'em for the instruction of the Ignorant, resolution of the Doubting, warning the Impenitent, encouraging the Serious, and comforting the Afflicted. Have we *Authority* or *Interest* in the World? Love will make use of it for the protection and defence of the Innocent and Good, for the restraint of Injustice and Oppression, for supporting the Interest of true Religion, and promoting all Designs that aim at the publick Welfare and Good. Have we *Estates* or *Riches*? Love will make us faithful Stewards in the distribution of 'em, not *lavishing* 'em away in profuse and prodigal Expence, not *hoarding* 'em up and

burying 'em as useleſs Talents in the Earth but *laying 'em out* for the relief of the Neceſſities, of our indigent Brethren, or ſome way for the publick Good. So far then as we are acted by this *god-like Love*, we ſhall be *publick Bleſſings* in our Day and Age, and uſe our Talents to the beſt purpoſe for our future Account.

And accordingly we have great Aſſurance that our conſcientious *Practice* of this *Duty* ſhall be graciously *Accepted*, and liberally *Rewarded*.

The Bleſſed God will highly approve ſuch an *Imitation* of his own diffuſive Goodneſs. He takes a peculiar complacency in every good Man, as a moſt amiable living *Image* of *himſelf*. Nay he declares that he reſents all the *Love* we extend to others *for his ſake*, as the moſt ſolid Inſtance and Proof of our *Love to himſelf*; and will accordingly *Recompence* it. *Inaſmuch as we have done it to the leaſt of his Children or his Creatures*, he will take it as *done unto himſelf*. What we give to *them*, he accounts as *lent to himſelf*, and is pleas'd to rank himſelf our Debtor for it, from whom we may expect to be repaid with abundant *Advantage* and *Interest*. Thoſe that have

have been *Merciful* themselves to their Brethren, shall most plenteously share in *his Mercy*. Those that have *Sown liberally* to the relief of others, shall most *liberally Reap* at his Hands in the day of final Retribution. What *Treasures* we have for his sake *Expended* on the Poor, shall be *Exchanged* for far better *Treasures* laid up for our selves in Heaven; and the friends we have made by our charitable use of deceitful Riches (that *Mammon of Unrighteousness*) shall receive us into *Eternal Habitations*, Luk. 16. 9. Such abundant *Encouragement* have we to this *Duty* from the prospect of the glorious *Recompence* of it. And what is here Suggested is abundantly confirm'd by the reason our Lord assigns for the sentence he passes on the *Righteous*, drawn from the Instances of their god-like *Goodness* and *Charity* (which I had occasion to mention before.)

2. This god-like *Goodness* and *Love* do's greatly *dispose* us for the *Blessedness* of the heavenly State.

And hence the Apostle prefers *Charity* or *Love* (inclusive of *Love to Men* as well as *God*) before *Faith* and *Hope*,

as a *Grace* that will then *abide*, and have its Exercise perfected, when the Exercise of our *Faith* and *Hope* shall cease, 1 Cor. 13. ult. And our imperfect Exercise of it here comes nearest to the *Employment* and *Work* of the Heavenly State. He that loves the *Blessed Jesus* (in his human Nature) as the most amiable Image of God; he that accordingly loves *Angels* and *glorify'd Saints* on the account of their more eminent Conformity unto him; he that loves *all Men* here proportionably to their *likeness* to God, as they are his *Creatures* or his *Children*; he that *Desires* and *Rejoices* in the *publick Welfare* of *Sacred* and *civil Societies*, even more than in his own; he is in some Measure *moulded* for *Heaven* that *Element* and *Seat* of perfect Love. His disposition is attemper'd to the Society of those *Blessed Spirits*, whose Love capacitates 'em to receive a new *Addition* to their *own Blessedness* from the *Felicity* of *others*, nay to resent a higher Satisfaction in the *glory of God*, than in their *own Felicity*. And O how Sweet and Delightful are the Exercises of *god-like Love* to those Heavenly Souls in whom the Divine Spirit has enkindled

Serm. III. *our Neighbour.* 439

led this spark of *Cælestial Fire*. How do they give us some foretaste of *Heaven* it self, in whose perfect Joys Divine Love is one principal Ingredient!

Lastly, I wou'd farther recommend this Duty from those *Excellent Examples* of it, which we are highly oblig'd to imitate.

How glorious a *Pattern* of boundless Love is the Blessed God himself! How vast is the *Extent*, how rich and liberal, how constant and uninterrupted are the streams of his diffusive Love! He is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all the Works of his Hands! Ps. 145.

9. His unexhausted Bounty reaches out it's liberal Hand to supply the Wants of every living Thing. (See v. 15, 16.)

Much more do's his Benignity and Care extend to all his reasonable Creatures. Even their Unworthiness and Guilt do's not stop the current of his daily Benefits. While they are wretchedly forgetful of him, he do's not leave 'em without the daily witnesses and monitors of his Goodness, giving 'em Rain and fruitful Seasons, and filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness, Acts 14. 17. He causes his Sun to shine on the Just and the Unjust, and his Rain to

descend on the Evil as well as the Good,
 Mar. 5. 45. And shall not we Write
 after so amiable a Copy as this? Shall not
 we extend our *Affection* to those whom
 the Blessed God makes the daily *Objects*
 of his beneficent *Love*? Are they not be-
 low his notice and kind regard, and shall
 they be thought unworthy of *our Love*?
 Nay shall we not in conformity to his
 Example, extend our *Love* to our *Ene-*
mies themselves, and endeavour (as he)
 to *overcome their Evil with our Good*?
 Especially when we are in *Gratitude* so
 deeply oblig'd hereto; for how hope-
 less and remediless had our Case been,
 had not the sovereign Grace and match-
 less Love of God reach'd out it's com-
 passionate Hand to recover and save us,
 while we were cherishing the most un-
 reasonable Enmity in our Hearts against
 him? And shall not we for his sake
 shew that tender *Pity* and *forgiving Love*
 to our *Enemies* that we Experienc'd when
 we were his?

Nay let us consider the marvellous
Example of Love that our *Blessed Sa-*
viour has set before us.

Serm.III. *our Neighbour.* 441

His *Life* (as I suggested before) was as it were one continued *Act* of Pity and Love to the *Bodies* and *Souls* of Men. But especially his voluntary *dying in our place and stead* was a most unparallel'd Instance of it. So ardent was his *Love*, that he prefers *our Interest* before *his own*, and Sacrifices *his Life* for the Redemption of *ours*. Not only do's he *Pray* for the pardon of his malicious Enemies with his *Dying-breath*, but he *sheds his precious Blood* to Purchase it. So dear to him was *our Salvation*, that he *submitted* to the *Curse* we had *deserv'd*, to recover our *Right* to the *forfeited* heavenly *Felicity*. So far did *his* matchless Love transcend the highest Expression of *ours*.

And shall not we *imitate* that wondrous Love of his, which we ourselves are the *Instances* of? Shall we not *Love one another*, as *Christ* also *Loved us*, and gave *himself an expiatory Sacrifice* for *us*? Eph. 5. 2. Nay shall not we *love our Enemies*, when he *laid down his Life* for *us*, while we were *perverse Enemies*, that he might *reconcile us to God*? Shall we think *those* unworthy of our *Love* for whom the Son of God did not dis-

dain to *shed* his precious Blood ? Did not all their *Mis-deserts* and *Guilt discourage* him from giving 'em this matchless Demonstration of his affectionate Pity, and shall it *debar* 'em from a share in *our's* ? What wou'd have become of us if our Blessed Saviour had dealt so with our selves ?

So that we cannot fail of *enlarging* our *Love* to *all Men*, unless we wretchedly forget our *own* Condition and Circumstances, when the Eye of our *God* and *Saviour* first pitied *us*, and his Bowels first yearned towards *us*. Nay unless we *counteract* the strongest *Obligations* that so transcendant Love has laid upon us to the *Imitation* of it in our carriage towards our *fellow-Creatures*, who can never be so *unworthy* of our *Love* as we were of *God's*. And sure we shou'd not be insensible of the admirable Force of that reasoning of the inspir'd Apostles, He had told us, *That herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins*, 1 John 4. 10. And thence he immediately draws this Inference, beloved, *If God so loved us, we ought*

ought also to Love one another. One might naturally have expected that he shou'd rather have inferr'd; *If God so loved us, we ought to love Him.* And that is indeed a practical *Inference* we shou'd never forget to draw from it. But he chooses rather to leave the drawing that reasonable Conclusion to our own Ingenuity and Gratitude; and insists upon this Inference I have mention'd, to intimate to us, That a gracious God had this in his Eye and Design; in giving us so matchless a Demonstration of his own Love to us, to lay upon us the highest and most endearing Obligation to this great Duty of *loving one another.* And we then only have a just sense of his infinite Love when it inspires us with that *mutual Love* of which he has set so glorious an *Example* before us.

And thus I have briefly run thro' these two Excellent Duties, of *the love of God*, and of *our Neighbour*, which contain such an admirable Summary of all practical Religion.

And our Blessed Saviour cou'd not in more emphatical Language represent to his

His hearers the Jews, the vast Importance and Moment of 'em, than by what he here subjoyns, *That on these two Commandments, hang all the Law and the Prophets.* The Expression (as one well observes) carries an allusion to the custom of the Jews of hanging up their *Laws* in a publick Place to be seen of all Men. And our Saviour thereby intimates to us, that whatever had been deliver'd either in the *Law* of Moses, or in the *Writings* of the *Prophets*, relating to our *Duty* towards God and Man, was reducible to these two comprehensive *Heads*, and virtually contain'd therein. And the Apostle Paul has a plain reference hereto, when he represents *Divine Love* as a *Fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. 13. 9.

How studiously then shou'd we all of us endeavour to get these two extensive *Commands* written in our *Hearts*, that they may be legible to all in our daily *Conversation*! How solid and clear an Evidence will our Conformity to 'em by *Divine Love* be of our filial Relation to God! What an attractive Glory and Lustre will it cast upon our Holy Profession! What an admirable Tendency will

Serm. III. *our Neighbour,* 445

will it have to render our converses with Men eminently *Beneficial* and *Useful*, as well as *Exemplary*! How will it *connaturalize* and *mould* our own Souls for the Heavenly State, and even give us in our own excellent Temper some sweet *foretastes* of it. For that excellent Passage of the Apostle *John* carries it's own Evidence along with it, *God is Love, and he that thus dwells in Love, dwells in God, and God in him,* 1 John 4. 16.

Saviour

Part 1. Chap. 1. Vers. 8.

FINIS

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Men eminently faithful and Useful; as
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and do that thou dwells in Love; dwells
in God, and God in him; 1 John 4. 16.
and so on.

How should we love
our Neighbour as ourself?

3. 11. 12. 3. 11. 12.
How should we love
our Neighbour as ourself?

A
SERMON,
ON
LOVE
To an Unseen
Saviour.

From I P E T. Chap. I. Verſ. 8.

By J. B.

DUBLIN:
Printed by E. Waters, in School-House-
Lane, near High-street, 1708.

A
SERMON
ON

L O V E



23 V. 1.

From 1 P. E. T. Chap. I. Ver. 8.

By J. B.

Printed by E. Watts in School-Street,
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A Sermon, O N L O V E

To an Unseen

Saviour.

From 1 P E T. Chap. I. Verſ. 8.

First Clause;

Whom having not ſeen ye Love.

AMong the three Things that
pious *Austin* did often wiſh
that he could have ſeen ; *one*
was *Chriſt Jeſus in the Fleſh.* And no
doubt

doubt we shou'd All of us have thought it a singular Advantage to have been with his Apostles, the *Eye and Ear-witnesses* of his Divine *Miracles* and *Heavenly Doctrine*, of his *exemplary Life*, and his *bitter Passion*; of his glorious *Resurrection* and *Ascension*. But blessed be God, that however *desirable* such a sight of our incarnate Redeemer wou'd have been, the want of it is no obstruction to our *lively Faith* in him, and *ardent Love* to him, nor to that *unspeakable Joy* that results from the vigorous Exercise of both. Nay as the want of that *actual Sight* will enhance the value of our *Faith* and *Love*, so it will heighten the *Reward* of 'em. For so much those words of our Blessed Lord to *Thomas* import, *Because thou hast seen, thou hast Believed, Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have Believed*, John 20. 29.

The Apostle directs this *Epistle* to the *Strangers scattered thro' Pontus Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bythmia*, whom he describes as *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus*, v. 1, 2. On their account he presents his solemn
Thanks

Thanksgivings to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who had by the Resurrection of Christ begot 'em to the lively Hope of an Heavenly Inheritance, and did now by his powerful Grace preserve 'em for the full and final Possession of it, v. 3, 4, 5. From the consideration of that he endeavours to support 'em under all their present Afflictions and Sufferings, which only tended to discover the Sincerity of their Divine Faith (as the Fire do's the purity of true Gold) and thereby to prepare 'em for that honourable and glorious Reward of it which they expected at the final Appearance of their Blessed Saviour. And having mentioned that Blessed Saviour to 'em, he breaks out into this rapture of Devout Affection in the Text, *Whom having not seen ye Love, &c.*

He speaks here of such as had never personally convers'd with the Son of God here below, and consequently of such whose Case in that respect is the same with ours, who live so many hundred Years after the Time of our Blessed Saviour's coming in the Flesh.

From the Words we may therefore observe,

F f

I. That

I. That 'tis the genuine Character of true Christians, that they are sincere Lovers of Christ.

II. 'Tis no Obstruction to their sincere Love of him, that they have not seen him.

III. Yet 'tis the Commendation of their Love that 'tis fix'd on that Blessed Saviour whom they have never seen.

Of these in their Order : And,

I. 'Tis the genuine Character of true Christians, that they are sincere lovers of Christ.

Having often had occasion to treat on this Subject, the love of Christ, I shall not here enlarge upon it as so important a Subject wou'd deserve, and might require, but content myself briefly to suggest.

First, What this love of Christ includes.

Secondly, What is requisite to the Sincerity of it : And,

Thirdly, How genuine a Character, it is of all true Christians.

First, Let us briefly consider, What the love of Christ includes.

And

And according to our Love to him includes various *Acts* suitable to the various grounds of *Amiability* in that blessed *Object*.

1. If we regard the *Excellency* of the *Object*, our Love to that Blessed Saviour includes, our *honourable Thoughts* of him, our high *Esteem* and *Veneration* for him.

And such a profound *Veneration* we shou'd entertain for him, if we either consider the *Dignity* of his *Person*, or the *Excellency* of his *Undertaking* and *Office*.

If we consider the *Dignity* of his *Person*, he is every way worthy of our affectionate *Esteem*, as he is *God manifested in the Flesh*; the *Eternal Word made Flesh*, the *only begotten Son of God* that condescended to dwell in our infirm Nature as his *Tabernacle*, and to converse with sinful Men here below. So that both the spotless *Innocence* and *Purity* of that *human Nature* he assum'd, and the *Glories* of that *Eternal God-head* that dwell bodily therein, do represent him as most *Amiable* and infinitely Worthy of our most *admiring* and *adoring Thoughts*.

And it shou'd brighten our *Veneration* for him to consider the *Excellency* of his *Undertaking* and *Office*.

For what can recommend him more to our highest Esteem, than to consider him as the compassionate and powerful *Mediator* that comes on that glorious Errand, to save our lost and perishing Nature, to re-establish a blessed Amity and Peace between an offended God and offending Man, by restoring us to the Divine Image and Favour, and thereby to the Hopes of that Glory and Happiness from which we fall? He cannot but appear most Amiable to us, as he is the great *Prophet* of his *Church*, and the *Light* of this lower *World*, who came from the Bosom of the Father, to give us the most perfect declaration of his Will, and the most glorious offers of his infinite Love. He is yet more Amiable, as he is the great *High-Priest* over the *House of God*, who by once offering up himself on Earth, obtain'd *Eternal Redemption* for us, and who in virtue of that *one Oblation*, is our perpetual and powerful *Intercessor* in the highest Heavens. He appears yet more glorious and adorable as the *Administrator*
of

of the Divine Kingdom here below, as the Head of his Church, and Head over all Things to it, and as the final Judge of the Quick and the Dead. All these illustrious Characters that belong to him as the true Messiah, do concur to represent him as the most deserving Object of our affectionate Veneration.

2. If we regard our Relation to him, and Interest in him, our Love includes.

Partly, our ardent Desires of such a special Relation to him, and Interest in him.

We Love him when we are ambitious of the nearest Union and Alliance to him. When we covet it as our highest Honour and Happiness to be his Disciples under his Heavenly Instruction; to be his Clients under his powerful Mediatory protection; to be his Subjects and Followers under his gracious Conduct and Government; to be the living Members of his Mystical Body, and the joint Heirs of his Eternal Kingdom. When thus to win or gain Christ, by securing an Interest in all the invaluable Blessings of that everlasting Covenant, that he is the Mediator of, is the summ of all our Wishes and Desires.

And accordingly our Love to him do's also farther imply, our *satisfying Delight in such a special Relation to him, and Interest in him, so far as we can attain a comfortable persuasion of it.*

We then love Him, when we value such a Relation to him, and Interest in him, above ten Thousand Worlds, and account all things but as contemptible *Dross and Dung* in comparison thereof. When we account our *vital Communion* with him (in all the *Influences* of his *sanctifying Spirit*, in all the *verue* of his *attoning Blood*; in all the *Blessings* of his *Everlasting Covenant*) to be our highest *Priviledge*, and rejoyce more in it, than if the whole World were our Possession. When we contemplate with the highest Pleasure and Satisfaction his being made of God unto us, *Wisdom and Righteousness, Sanctification and compleat Redemption.* For Love always implies our high complacency in the Object so far as 'tis Enjoy'd, or we have the comfortable Prospect of such Enjoyment.

3. If we regard the *numerous* and *invaluable Benefits* that we derive from our *Blessed Saviour*; so our Love to him includes our *affectionate and grateful* sense

sense of all our unconceivable Obligations to him.

For *Gratitude* is necessarily imply'd in our *Love* to an eminently kind *Benefactor*. And so do's our *love* to the B. Jesus imply our most thankful resentment of his marvellous and transcendant Love, and of all the inestimable Fruits of it. We then *love Him*, when our Souls are most sensible of, and deeply affected with his matchless Compassion and Condescension to us, and are taken up in adoring admiring Thoughts of it. When we contemplate all the various and admirable *Benefits* that we derive from him, with a most grateful Apprehension of our being indebted for 'em to his unexampled Pity and Love. When the consideration of all those Blessings of his Covenant which he has *Enstated* us in the *Possession*, or *rais'd* us to the *Hope* of, engraves an indelible *Law of Gratitude* upon our Hearts to that merciful *Saviour* and *lover of Souls*.

Again.

4. If we regard the *Interests* of the Blessed Jesus himself, so our *Love* implies our highest *Good-will* thereto.

We

We may be truly said to *love others*, when we *wish well* to 'em, when we regard *their Interests* as our *own*, and feel in our selves a strong propension to do 'em all the good we are capable of, and relish a true Delight in doing it. And tho' as to our *Blessed Saviour*, our *goodness* do's not (properly) *Extend* to him, and he can receive no *real Benefit* from us, yet since he is pleas'd to regard the Success of his mediatory Undertaking (in the glorifying God, and saving of Souls) as *his Interest*. We then truly Love him, when we wish well to that blessed Interest of his; when we earnestly desire the Advancement and Enlargement of his Kingdom; when we are prompted with an ardent Zeal to promote it according to all the Advantages put into our Hands; when we rejoyce to *see the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his Hands*; when we resent with the highest Satisfaction whatever tends to exalt his Honour and Glory; and to render the Administrations of his mediatorial Kingdom successful here below. When as *John the Baptist* speaks of himself, *We are as the Friends of the Bride-groom, who reioyce to see him enthron'd in the Hearts* of those that make
up

up his *mystical Spouse*, and are pleas'd to see him *increase in Honour and Glory*, even tho' we shou'd decrease, John 3. 29.

Such a variety of *Acts* do's our love to *Christ* include, according to the different grounds of *Amiability* in this glorious *Object*.

I come therefore,

Secondly, To consider, *What is requisite to the Sincerity of our love to him.*

Now to the *sincerity* of our love to him, 'tis requisite,

1. That our Love with respect to the *Object* shou'd be *Entire*.

i. e. Every thing in that Blessed Saviour must be *Amiable* to us. Every part of his *Undertaking* and *Office* must recommend him to our affectionate Veneration. We must Love him, not only as our *Prophet* and *Teacher*, our *Propitiation* and our *Advocate*, but as our *Head* and *Lord*. We must as truly approve of his gracious Design to rescue us from the Dominion of Sin, as to redeem us from the Punishment due to it. We must love him as the *restorer* of our *lapsed Nature* to the *Image* of God, as well

well as the restorer of our guilty Souls to his *Favour*. He must be as truly dear to us as the *Author* of our *Sanctification*, as he is as the *Author* of our final *Redemption* and *Salvation*. We must as truly value his *Scepter* as we do his *Cross*, and as sincerely love his just *Government* as we do his powerful *Mediation*.

2. Our *Love* with respect to the *Measure* or *Degree* of it, must be *Superlative*.

We do not sincerely Love our Blessed Saviour, if we love Him not above all. For since he is so infinitely Amiable, since his Love to us is so transcendently great; since the *Benefits* we derive from him are *Invaluable*, we do owe him an *unrival'd Degree* of Affection, in which nothing in this World must be allow'd to stand *Competitor*. And so much our Blessed Lord plainly intimates to us, when he tells us, *That whosoever loves Father or Mother, Son or Daughter more than him, is not worthy of him*, Mat. 10. 37. Nay elsewhere we are told, *That except a Man hate Father and Mother, Wife and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea and even his own Life, he cannot be his Disciple*, Luke

Luk. 14. 26. i. e. Except he comparatively hate 'em, so as to be willing to renounce them whenever he must either *forfake them or forfake his Blessed Lord*.

And to add no more.

3. Our *Love* to Christ must produce suitable *Effects* and *Fruits*.

It must be a *Love*, not in *Word* and *Tongue* only, but in *Truth* and in *Deed*. It must therefore prompt us to zealous Endeavours of advancing his Kingdom; It must engage us to a chearful Obedience to his Commands. For he himself makes this the certain and unerring Test of it, *If ye love me keep my Commands*, John 14. 14. And then *are ye my Friends*, if ye do *whatsoever I Command you*, John 15. 14.

Having thus briefly shown, what is requisite to the sincerity of our love to our *B. Saviour*, I proceed.

Thirdly, To shew, that this is the genuine *Character* of all true *Christians*.

And this I need not enlarge upon.

The *New Testament* do's every where describe 'em by this *Character*.

They

They are such *as love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*, Eph. 6. 24. And so *Essential* is this Character to every true Christian, that the Apostle makes the want of it a certain Mark of one that deserv'd to be utterly rejected from *Christian Communion*, *If any Man* (saith he) *love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*, 1 Cor. 16. 22. He looks upon such an *one* as under a dreadful *Curse* indeed, and if he persisted in this wretched Dis-affection to the Son of God, deserving to be devoted to remediless Perdition.

And that this must be the genuine *Character* of every true Christian is hence Evident, because 'tis the genuine tendency of the whole *Gospel* to form this *Superlative Love of Christ* in our Hearts. We cannot sincerely believe what the Gospel reveals concerning the *Dignity* of his *Person*, and concerning the *Excellency* of his *mediatorial Undertaking*, concerning his *matchless Love to us*, and our unconceivable *Obligations to him*, but we must ardently *love Him*. Much less will he own those for his, and admit 'em to a *Communion* with him in all his invaluable *Benefits*, who do not

En-

Enthroned him in their *Hearts*, and make him the *Object* of their *superlative Affection*.

Having thus consider'd this *Character* of all true Christians, that they are *sincere lovers of Christ*; I proceed to consider the

Ild. *Observation*, viz. *That 'tis no Obstruction to our sincere Love of Christ, that we have not seen him with our bodily Eyes.*

That 'tis in *matter of fact* no *Obstruction* to our sincere Love of Christ, is evident from the *Experience* of many thousands and millions in every Age, who have liv'd since the time of his manifestation in the *Flesh*; but who not only have born a *superlative Affection* to him, but have given the most demonstrative *Proof* of it, by their ardent *Zeal* for his *Glory*, by their *cheerful and costly Obedience* to his *Commands*, and by *Sacrificing* their *dearest Interests* in the *World* to his *Service*.

All therefore that I shall attempt under this Head is to shew, that it ought not in reason to be any *Hindrance* or *Obstruction* to our sincere love of Christ, that we have not seen him with our bodily Eyes.

And

And that will appear if we consider these two Things.

1. That we have sufficient Evidence of the Truth of what the Gospel declares concerning him.

2. That our belief thereof is greatly confirm'd by what we our selves have the inward Sensation and Experience of.

1. We have sufficient Evidence of the Truth of what the Gospel declares concerning our B. Saviour, in order to the recommending him to our highest Love.

The matters of Fact relating to the Birth, to the Life, to the Doctrine of Christ, and the Miracles he wrought for the confirmation of it; to his Death and Resurrection and glorious Ascension, are related to us by those that were Eye and Ear-witnesses of 'em. By Persons of known Fidelity and Integrity, who could not themselves be deceiv'd as to these matters of fact (which were the plain Objects of their Senses) and who have given the most satisfying Proof that they had no intention to Deceive us. For besides that they declared these Truths in the very Age wherein those affairs were Transacted, and that in the Face of the most inveterate Enemies who

had all imaginable *Advantage* as well as *Inclination* to convict 'em of falsehood, if that had been possible ; and that they seal'd these Truths with their *Blood* ; I lay besides this, their *Testimony* was confirm'd by so extraordinary *Gifts* and *miraculous Operations* of that Holy Spirit which was pour'd out upon 'em by that Blessed Saviour whose Gospel they Publish'd, that if we suppose their *Narratives* to be lying *Fables*, we must suppose the *God of Truth* to be accessory to the propagating the Imposture by the most glorious Exertions of his own Almighty Power. And what they declar'd concerning the Blessed Jesus was so visible an Accomplishment of the *Predictions* of the *Old Testament* concerning the promised Messiah, as greatly confirms the Truth of their *Relations*, and the glorious *Characters* that they give of him as the *Son of God* and the *Saviour of the World*. And the *Doctrine* they suppose him to have deliver'd, is so worthy of God, so conformable to the Principles of natural Religion; so proper to supply the woful *Defects* of natural Light, so conducive to advance the Glory of God in the Recovery and Salvation of Men,

Men, that it carries in it self the brightest *Characters* of it's own *Divine Original*. And the spotless *purity* of his *Life* was so suitable to the *Excellency* of his *Doctrine*, as to render it the more Evident, that he *came from Heaven* to direct us in the *way* thither.

In a word, No *supernatural Revelation* can be suppos'd more worthy of God, none cou'd be brought us by a more *credible Messenger* than the *Blessed Jesus*; none cou'd be more conspicuously *attested* by numerous and uncontrolled *Miracles*; none cou'd be handed down to us by more credible and unsuspected *Witnesses*; no *Witnesses* cou'd produce clearer *Evidences* of their own *Divine Inspiration*, and consequently of their own *Veracity*; and none cou'd give a more solemn confirmation of the Truth of their *Doctrine* by their steady *Adherence* to it under the greatest *Persecutions*, and the laying down their own *Lives* in the *Defence* of it. So that we cannot dis-believe their relation of these *Matters of Fact*, without destroying all *human Faith*, and what is much more without destroying all *Divine Faith*, and rejecting the clearest *Evidences* that can

ever

ever be expected of a Divine Revelation. We have therefore all possible reason to *believe in*, and consequently to *Love* that Blessed Saviour, *tho' we never saw him*. Especially if we add,

2. *That our belief of what the Gospel declares concerning our Blessed Saviour, is greatly confirm'd by our own inward Sensation and Experience.*

We do not in this Case barely rely upon the *Testimony* of others; for as the Apostle *John* speaks, 1 John 5. 10. *He that believes on the Son of God, hath the Witness (or Testimony τὴν μαρτυρίαν) in himself.* We have actually *felt* and *found* those glorious *Effects* of his saving Power that do fully convince us of the Truth of what the inspir'd Apostles declare concerning him. We do find a marvellous and glorious *Light* diffus'd into our Minds by his Heavenly *Doctrine*, and by the illumination of his Holy Spirit, whereby *we* that were once *Darkness*, are now made *Light in the Lord*. So that we may truly say as the *Blind Man* when restor'd to his Sight, *One thing I know, that whereas I was Blind, now I See*, John 9. 25. We do find a vast distinction in point of Divine

Knowledge, between the *Christian* and the *Infidel World*; nay in the *Christian World*, between those *Nations* where this *Light* is set on a *Candlestick*, and where 'tis hid under a *Busbel*; and we find in point of *practical* and *saving Knowledge* no less difference between those that *cordially embrace* Divine Truth, and those that *hold it in Unrighteousness*. Nay all true Christians do find by happy Experience the *transforming Efficacy* of the Gospel of Christ as accompany'd with the powerful Influences of his renewing sanctifying Spirit. They have felt a Divine *Energy* and *Vertue* therein, to mortify their most unruly Passions, to subdue their most inveterate Lusts, to reinstamp the amiable Image of God upon their Souls, and to conform 'em to that of his incarnate Son; to elevate their carnal Affections towards Heaven; to beget 'em to the living Hope of an incorruptible Inheritance, and to Mould and Frame 'em for a blessed Share and Lot among the Saints in Light. They have found a marvellous *Vertue* in the Doctrine of a crucify'd Saviour to dispel their guilty Fears, to revive their despondent Hopes, to infuse into their Con-

sciences

sciences that *Peace* that passes all *Understanding*, and that *Joy* that is *unspeakable* and full of *Glory*; and these are such truly great and god-like *Effects*, these are such solid and substantial *Instances* of the saving Power of *Christ*, as leave 'em no reason to doubt of the *Truth* of what the Gospel relates concerning him. So that they may truly say in reference to those *Eye* and *Ear Witnesses* by whom these matters of fact have been transmitted to 'em, what the *Inhabitants* of *Sychar* said to the *Samaritan Woman*, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him our selves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the World*, John 4. 42. So may we say, now we *Believe*, not meerly on the *Report* and *Saying* of these *inspir'd Historians*, but also because we our selves have felt the blessed *Effects* of his *saving Grace* in our own *Souls*; and therefore know by happy *Experience*; *That he is indeed the Saviour of the World*. [See the two Sermons in the first Volumn on 1 John 5. 10.]

And if our having *never seen* that *B. Saviour* be on both these accounts, no *rational Objection* against our *believing* what

the Gospel relates concerning him, it shou'd be no *Obstruction* to that *superlative Love* of him that such a sincere *Belief* shou'd *inspire* us with. Tho' we have never seen him, yet we have the highest reason to *believe in Him*, and consequently to *love Him*.

But then I must add what occurs in the

III^d. and last Observation, viz. *That 'tis a commendation of our Love to that B. Saviour, that we love Him, tho' we never saw him.*

For what our *Saviour* observes in reference to our *Faith*, is equally applicable to our *Love*; *Thomas because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; but blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed, John 20. 29.* No wonder that those shou'd *believe his Resurrection* who actually saw him *Expire on the Cross*, who beheld him *laid in his Grave*, and who not only *saw him when Risen*, but actually *convers'd with him*, and had with *Thomas* the advantage and privilege to *see the print of the Nails*, and to *thrust their Hands into his Side*. But to *believe it upon the Testimony of others* who were the *chosen Witnesses of Christ* on the

the

the account of those *Credentials* he sent 'em with, when we never saw it our selves, is a more *difficult* and therefore a more *noble* and *commendable Act* of *Divine Faith*. This discovers an *ingenious Temper* of Mind, sincerely inquisitive after Divine Truth, dispos'd to entertain such satisfying Evidence of it as God sees fit to give, tho' in some respects short of that *Evidence of Sense* which the Apostles themselves had. And the like I may say in reference to our *Love of that B. Saviour*. To be as deeply affected with his heavenly Doctrine, as if we our selves had heard those *gracious Words* that proceeded from his Mouth; to have our *Hearts* as irresistibly drawn to him in ardent Affection as if we had stood at the foot of the Cross and been the *Spectators* of his *Sufferings* there; to love him as fervently as if we had with the beloved *Disciple* lain in his Bosom, or beheld the *Agonies* of his dying Love; for us to long as much for his glorious second *Appearance*, as if we had with the Apostles seen him *Ascending into the highest Heavens*, this argues a nobler strain of Love. For our *Faith* and *Love* are so much the more *commendable*

and Rewardable, when destitute of this Advantage of sensible Evidence which theirs had. And therefore doubtless the Apostle speaks this to the praise of these Christian Converts he Writes to, that they Loved that B. Jesus whom they had not seen.

It now remains, that we make some brief Application of the whole.

Is it the Character of all true Christians, that they are sincere lovers of Christ? Is it no obstruction to their loving Him, that they never saw him? And is this one Commendation of their Love? Then,

I. We may hence see, how few there are among professed Christians that have this evidence of Relation to Christ, that they are sincere lovers of Him.

How many Thousands are to be found in the Communion of the Christian Church that want this Character of true Christians! How few are there that entertain such honourable Thoughts of Christ as are suitable to the Dignity of his Person, and the Excellency of his Undertaking! How few do earnestly desire any saving Interest in him, or are in good earnest concern'd to secure it! How few do indeed value a special Alliance

liance to him above all the World! How few carry about any affecting and grateful Sense of their unconceivable Obligations to him! How few have their Hearts inflam'd with any cordial Zeal for his Glory and Service!

Many may pretend to Love such a Saviour as wou'd deliver 'em from the Wrath to come; but how few love such a one as comes to save 'em from their Sins themselves! Many do pretend some slight and superficial Affection to Christ, but they love the World better. Christ may have their Knee, but the World has their Hearts. Many pretend to love Him, but they woefully fail in giving him that solid Proof of it, a sincere Obedience to his Commands. Their pretended Love to him produces no difficult and Self-denying, no costly and expensive Services to his Interest, no Fruits of beneficent Love to his indigent Members, that bear any tollerable proportion to their real Abilities. All these are plainly destitute of that Excellent Character in my Text by which the Disciples of Christ shou'd be distinguish'd and known, viz. Their unfeigned and superlative and fruitful Love to an unseen Saviour.

II. I wou'd hence speak something for the *Reproof of such in whom this Character is not found.*

To be *destitute of the love of Christ*, argues your *Temper to be Vile and Base*, and your *State to be extremely Dangerous.*

1. It argues your *Temper to be Vile and Base.*

How stupid must those Minds be that are possess'd with no *affectionate Veneration* for so *glorious a Person* as the *incarnate Son of God*, coming on so *Excellent a Design* as that of *recovering our lapsed Nature* ! How obdurate must those Hearts be that are *unaffected* with all the marvellous *Demonstrations* of his infinite *Love*; and *feel* nothing of the *attractive Power* of it ! What greater *Proof* cou'd he have given us of his *unparallel'd Pity* ! What cou'd he have done more to deserve our highest and best *Affections* ! And how monstrous *Ingratitude* do's it argue *not to Love him* that has *done and suffer'd* so much to *endear him to our Hearts* ! Can we behold him assuming our *Nature*; and coming to us as the *Messenger of the Father* with the most welcome *Tidings of Reconciliation*

conciliation and Peace that were ever sent from Heaven to this guilty World; can we see him substituting himself in our place and stead, *bearing our sins in his own Body, bleeding and dying for us, and giving his own invaluable Life as a Ransom for ours*; can we consider him as *knocking at the Door of our Hearts*, and tending to us Pardon and Peace, Life and Salvation as the purchase of his Blood for us, and *not Love him*? O how *insensible* must those Hearts be, that are proof against such *irresistable Charms* of Divine Love as these?

2. Nay it argues your *State* to be *extremely Dangerous*.

To convince you thereof, I need only remind you of that awful passage of the Apostle already cited, *If any Man love not our Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema, Maranatha*. The words refer to the two *higher Degrees* of *Excommunication* that the *Jews* were wont to pass on the most *hainous* and *obdurate Offenders*, whom the *first degree* had been ineffectual to Reclaim. *If any Man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema*. i. e. Let him be as one utterly *Excluded* from

from the *Favour* of God, and the *Communion* of his *People*; let him be regarded as *one* under his *Displeasure* and *Curse*, devoted to *Destruction*. *Maranatha.* q. d. Let him know, that the *Lord* will come to take severe *Vengeance* on such as are wretchedly *Disaffected* to him, and as they now shut him out of their *Hearts*, will forever shut 'em out of his heavenly *Kingdom*. He will come to *destroy* those his *Enemies* that *would* not have him to *Reign* over 'em.

III. Let me then hence *urge* you to *Love* an *unseen Saviour*.

Let the *Dignity* of his *Person* recommend him to your *highest Esteem*. Let the *Excellency* of his *glorious Undertaking* *Endear* him. Let his transcendant and unparallel'd *Love* *inflame* your *Affections*, that your *grateful Love* may bear some *Proportion* to his innumerable and valuable *Benefits*. *Love* him for those *Treasures of Divine Wisdom* that are *hid in him*, and for that *Heavenly Light* which he came to *Communicate* to a dark and benighted *World*. *Love* him for that *Eternal Redemption* that he has obtain'd at the *Expence* of his
own

own precious Blood. Love him for that fulness of Grace that dwells in him as the Head, to be imparted and deriv'd to all the Members of his Mystical Body. Love him that has not only ennobled your Nature by assuming it into such a near Union to the Divine, but has ennobled you by advancing you to the Dignity and Privileges of the Sons of God. Love him for that glorious Heavenly Inheritance he has Entitled you to, and will e'er long bring you to the final and indefeizable Possession of. O carry about a deep and lasting Sense of your infinite Obligations to him. O value an Interest in him above all the World. Breath after nearer Conformity to him, and fuller Communion with him. Esteem your Relation to him as your highest Honour, and your Interest in him as your highest Happiness. Rejoyce that he is yours, and you are his. Let your Love to him be Entire and Superlative, giving him the sovereignty in your Affections. Let the Sincerity of it appear in your Affectionate Concern for his Interest and Glory, and your chearful Obedience to his Commands, and your fruitful beneficent Love to all that Love him in Sincerity.

That

That you may thus Love him.

1. Keep up the lively Exercise of *Faith*, that his being *Unseen* may not be an *hindrance* and *obstruction* to your *Love*. If Christ dwells much in our *Hearts by Faith*, we shall be no strangers to the Exercise of *Love*. Consider what was before suggested concerning the clear Evidence we have of the Truth of what the Gospel relates concerning him. Consider how much this is confirm'd by that Testimony you have in your selves, even your inward Experience and Sensation of the happy Effects of his saving Power. And he that has *begun*, will *finish* the great Work of your *Salvation*. What tho' you Enjoy not his *bodily Presence*, when you do Enjoy what is more valuable, his *spiritual Presence*, even the *Communications* of that *Holy Spirit* that is sent to *Dwell with you for ever*! What tho' he is *Invisible* to your *bodily Eyes*, you may realize him to your *Faith* as him that was *Dead and is Alive*, and lives for evermore, and has the *Keys of the unseen World and of Death*, Rev. 1. 18. He is now *visible* to all the blessed *Attendants*

dants on the Heavenly Court, and will e'er long *visibly* appear to compleat the Salvation of his chosen.

2. *Let us often think how we shall Love that B. Saviour when we shall actually see him, and how glorify'd Saints do now Love him.*

Were we in the *immediate* presence of Christ; were we admitted to *personal* Converse with him in all the glory of his exalted State; were we with *Paul* rap't up into the *third* Heavens, and into the *Paradise* of God, and were there present with him whom our Souls love; O what ardours and transports of devout *Affection* wou'd such a sight raise in us! With what eagerness shou'd we as it were rush into the *Embraces* of that compassionate *Lover* and *Saviour* of Souls! How wou'd our *Hearts* burn within us! How wou'd the *ravishing* Sight fill our Minds with *Joy*, and our *Mouths* with *Praise*! And shall we now content ourselves with so rare and *unaffecting* Thoughts of him, so languid *Affections* to Him, so slender and heartless *Acknowledgments*? Do his *Redeemed* and *Glorified* Members above love Him

no better? Do they feel no greater warmth of devout Affection towards Him? O let their *Example* reproach and *shame* us; let us now love him as those that hope e'er-long to be for Ever present with him.

3. Let us study to comprehend more the vast Dimensions of his Love.

There is a breadth and length, an height and depth in it, that surpasses our Knowledge. But frequent and lively Contemplation wou'd discover more and more of his infinite *Amiability* and boundless Love to attract our Hearts unto Him.

Let us fix our Eyes on his Love as it was display'd in the depth of his *Abasement* and *Humiliation*.

And sure we cannot trace him to the Garden, and there behold his amazing Agonies of Soul and His bloody Sweat. We cannot follow him to the High-Priest's Hall, and there see him bearing the unjust sentence that condemn'd him, and the cruel out-rages and scorn that were offer'd to him with unmov'd patience; we cannot follow him to the Cross, & there see him made the seeming Triumph of Devils and wicked Men: But especially we cannot there behold him pouring

ring out his Soul unto Death, bearing our Iniquities in His own Body, wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities, expiating our Guilt with His own Blood, and freely Dying to recover us to the hope of *Eternal Life*; but we must see such an astonishing scene of *unparallel'd Love* as is capable to conquer and win our Hearts, and to inflame 'em with the highest ardours of grateful Affection.

Again, if we behold His Love, as discover'd to us in his state of *Exaltation*.

If we contemplate him as *always appearing in the Divine presence for us*, As making perpetual Intercession for all that come to God by him, as employing his Royal Power to carry on and perfect the great Work of our Salvation, as sending His Spirit to abide in our Hearts, and his Angels as *ministring Spirits to minister to us*, as preparing Mansions of Light and Glory for us, and standing with Crowns in his Hand to place on the Heads of his persevering Followers; We cannot I say, Contemplate these marvellous Effects of his boundless Love to such undeserving Creatures as we are; but we must

must Love him tho' Unseen. For tho' himself be Invisible, these are Glorious and infinitely beneficial Effects of his Power and Love that shou'd forever En-dear him to us.

4. Let us consider, *That our Love is the best and almost only Return we can make him.*

Our best Services, and highest Praises can make no Addition to the Glory and Happiness of his Divine Nature. And since ardent Love is the highest Tribute we can pay him, our Ingratitude wou'd be most inexcusable if we shou'd refuse him that. Nay so marvellous is his Condescention, that he claims our Love that it may render us more capable and meet Objects of his own beneficent Love. Our sincere Love to him is the most satisfying evidence of our real Interest in him, and is the best preparative for that State where we hope to be receiv'd into his Everlasting Embraces. If we Love him tho' Unseen, we shalle'er long see him, and be Imparadis'd in the Bosom of his infinite Love.

3 NO 83

F I N I S.

T W O
SERMONS

On the L O V E of

G O D,

In sending his Son to be our Propitiation.

SERM. I.

On 1 J O H N Chap. 4. Verse x.

By J. B.

D U B L I N :

Printed by *E. Waters*, in *School-House-*
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G O D

to the British Society of the



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ON THE
LOVE
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In sending his Son to be our Propitiation.

SERM. I.

On 1 JOHN Chap. 4. Verse x:

*Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but
that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Pro-
pitiatio[n] for our Sins. ———*

THE Love of God manifested
to us in his own Son (that in-
valuab[e] Gift, that unimitable

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Mirrou of Divine Love) is a Subject of that unspeakable Importance and Weight, as to deserve our most frequent and attentive Contemplation. We shou'd not content our selves with a few slight and superficial Thoughts of it, but suffer our Minds to dwell upon it till we feel the sweet and irresistible *Constraints* of Divine Love. The whole of practical Religion (as I have shewn) consists in *Loving the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Strength, and Mind, and in loving our Neighbour as our selves*; and there is no Motive more powerful to kindle that holy Flame in our Breasts, than our believing Meditations on the *love of God*, as displaid in this transcendent and marvellous *Instance* of it.

All the *Perfections* of the Divine Nature are in themselves *Equal*, because they are all *Boundless* and *Infinite*; yet they are not represented with *equal Lustre* in every Act of his Providence and Government over this World. His Attributes with respect to their Exercise and Effects (like the *Stars* in the Firmament) *shine with a different Glory*. In the *Creation* it self, some parts of it bear

Son to be our Propitiation. 487

bear more eminently the Signature and Stamp of the *Power*, others of the *Wisdom*, others of the *Goodness* of God. And thus in the great Work of *Redemption*, tho' all the Perfections of God as Governour of fallen-Man concur with admirable Harmony, yet this amiable attribute of *Divine Love* shines in that Dispensation with the most bright and Majestick Rays. In this blessed Work God has indeed conspicuously display'd his manifold *Wisdom*, his tremendous *Justice*, his Almighty *Power*, his unchangeable *Faithfulness* and *Truth*; but it do's above all most Illustriously appear in this Transaction, *That God is Love*. So that the inspir'd Apostle might well set this peculiar Remark upon it, *Herein is Love*, &c. i. e. Herein is the most amiable Discovery; here is the most unparallel'd Instance and convincing Proof of the Love of God, *That when we loved not God, he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins*.

The Apostle had at v. 8. told us, *He that loveth not, knows not God, for God is Love*. Hereby intimating, that all practical Knowledge of God, who in

488 *God's Love in sending his*

the Gospel has so clearly represented himself as boundless Love, wou'd transform us into an amiable Resemblance of him in god-like Love. And to convince us, that *God is Love*, the Apostle appeals to that clear Manifestation he has made thereof, *in sending his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro' him.* And so full were his Thoughts of this pleasing and affecting Subject, so warm a sense of it had he upon his own Heart, that he repeats and further illustrates this admirable Instance of *Divine Love* in the Words I have read.

The Subject then of our present Meditations lies plain before us in the Text, viz.

That herein the B. God has given us the most convincing Proof and the highest Instance of his Love, viz. In so loving us, when we loved not Him, as to send his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

In speaking hereto, I shall

First Consider, *What love of God the Apostle here speaks of.*

Secondly, I shall take notice of what the Text Suggests, to *Illustrate and set off*

Son to be our Propitiation. 489
off the Greatness of Divine Love in this
most astonishing and glorious Instance of
it; The sending his Son to be the Propiti-
ation for our Sins.

And lastly, I shall *Apply* the whole.

First, Let us consider, *What love of*
God the Apostle here speaks of.

And here that obvious distinction be-
tween God's *love of Pity* and *good-*
will, and *that* of his *Complacency* or
Delight must be made Use of.

'Tis not God's *love of Complacency*
and Delight, the Apostle is here speak-
ing of. None are capable *Objects* of
that, but such on whom his amiable ho-
ly Image is Re-instamp'd by his renew-
ing Grace. *He is a God that has no*
pleasure in Wickedness, neither shall E-
vil dwell with him; The Foolish shall not
stand in his Sight, He hates all the Wor-
kers of Iniquity, Pl. 5. 4, 5. We were
all of us while *Dead in Trespasses and*
Sins, Children of Wrath as well as o-
thers, Eph. 2. 3. And the same Per-
son cannot be at once an *Enemy* and yet
a *Favourite* : And therefore the Apostle
tells us, *this love of God* was extended
to us *when we loved not Him.* i.e. When
our Hearts were devoy'd of all filial in-

nuous Affection towards him, and on the contrary possess'd with a most unreasonable perverse Enmity against him. And it were absolutely inconsistent with the Purity and Holiness of his Nature to suppose, that in this state of Enmity we shou'd be the *Objects* of his *Approbation* and *Delight*.

The Words must then be understood of God's Love of *Compassion* and *Goodwill*.

And this *love of Pity* towards us, is reconcileable with the *Purity* and *Justice* of his Nature. The B. God may look with a compassionate Eye on his *Creatures*, as they are the *Works of his own Hands*, while he regards 'em with a displeased Eye, consider'd as *perverse Enemies* and *ungrateful Rebels* against him.

And accordingly his Pity may put him on contriving a way of reducing such Rebels to a state of voluntary Subjection, that they may become again capable Objects of his Favour and delightful Affection. He may even while he abhors and detests their *unnatural Defection* from him, yet resent the *extreme Misery* they are thereby in Danger of being

being abandon'd to ; and his Bowels may so tenderly yearn over 'em, as to excite him to *devise means to bring home his Banished*. He may be willing to be reconciled to his offending Subjects on such Terms as are consistent with the honour of his Government ; and this gracious propension of his Nature may engage his Wisdom to find out some effectual Expedient to secure his own Honour, and yet save his lost and perishing Creatures ; and it may prompt him upon such a salvo to the Honour of his Law and Justice, to offer Terms of Reconciliation and Peace to all that will, thro' a Mediator, penitently return to him. And 'tis this Love of *Benevolence* and *Pitty* that must prepare the Way for our becoming (upon our sincere Conversion to him) the *Objects* of his Love of *Complacency* and *Delight*.

Now 'tis this *love of Pitty* that the Apostle here calls us to Contemplate, and sets before us the most convincing *Proof* and the most unparallel'd *Instance* of it And this leads me,

Secondly, To take Notice of what the Text Suggests, *to illustrate and set off the marvellous Greatness of the*
Love

492 *God's Love in sending his*

Love of God, and especially in this Instance of it, His sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

Now in order hereto, we may distinctly consider.

I. In *whose* Breast this *Love of Pity and Good-will* was *Entertain'd*.

II. To *whom* it was *Extended*, and under *what Character* we were then consider'd.

III. What *Effect* towards us this *Love* has produc'd ; or in what *Instance* it has display'd it self.

Under these *Heads* I shall have occasion to consider, what the Text suggests to *enhance the Love of God*.

And,

I. Let us consider, In *whose Breast* this *love of Pity and Good-will* was *Entertain'd*.

'Twas a *Love* entertain'd in the Breast of that great and glorious Majesty, who is infinitely Blessed in himself, and has not the least need of us to preserve and increase his own Felicity. He is the Fountain of most perfect Satisfaction to himself, who can neither receive any addition

dition to it from our Recovery and Salvation, nor any Diminution from our deserved ruin. Our *Righteousness* can no more be any real *Gain* and *Benefit* to him, than our multiply'd *Transgressions* can do him any real *Hurt* and *Mischief*, Job 35. 6, 7. His Love to us do's not therefore arise from any *Indigency* or *Want* of us, but from the *All-sufficiency* and *overflowing fulness* of his own gracious Nature. 'Tis a pure and liberal Affection without any other *Motive* than what his *own Bowels* Suggest. Nay 'tis a Love entertain'd in the *Breast* of an injur'd and provok'd Sovereign, who had all possible Advantage given him to glorify his Justice in our deserved Destruction; And who has for any thing we know in those immense Regions above us innumerable Intellectual Beings to be the perpetual Monuments of his Goodness, and Instruments of his Praise; tho' we had been all left to become the Examples of his just Severity. Of which more may occur under the next Head.

II. Let us farther consider, *To whom God has extended his Love*, and under what *Character* we were *Consider'd* when he gave us this marvellous *Proof* of it.

Herein

494 *God's Love in sending his*

Herein is Love, that God loved us, *when we loved not him.*

It indeed we only consider'd our own Rank among God's reasonable Creatures, it ought to enhance his Love in our Esteem, that 'tis extended to us who are so far *below* his Notice and Consideration. What are we but despicable Worms, so many clods of animated Dust, Creatures who *dwell in Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the Dust*, Job. 4. 19. And if *all the Nations of the Earth* be in the sight of God but *as the drop of the Bucket and small Dust of the Ballance*, how great is his Condescension that sets his Heart upon such *Nothing and Vanity* as we are? Is. 40. 15, 16, &c. Especially when we lift up our Eyes to those spacious Heavens above us, and consider how innumerable noble intellectual Beings do probably inhabit 'em; we may well say, *What is Man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou visitest him?* Ps. 8. 4. And accordingly we may justly resent it as an Instance of great Goodness and Condescension, that the sovereign Majesty of Heaven, the *Father of Spirits*, that has so innumera-

merable *Spirits* of higher rank and order to *minister to Him*, shou'd own a *Relation* to, and exercise his merciful Care over these *Spirits of our's that dwell in Flesh*, and which consequently seem to be of the *lowest Order* of intellectual Beings. And yet he disdains not to be call'd, *The God of the Spirits of all Flesh*, nor are they excluded from his Care and Love.

But we must here especially consider, in order to our illustrating the *Greatness* of the *Love of God*, our present *State* and *Condition* in which his Eye beheld us, when his Bowels of pity yearn'd over us, and the *Temper* and *Disposition* we bare towards him.

1. As to our *State* and *Condition*, we were consider'd as *guilty Offenders*, *obnoxious to his vindictive Justice*.

And indeed otherwise we had needed none to interpose for us to become our *Propitiation*. We were the Transgressors of God's Holy Law, chargeable with numberless Violations of it, and on the account thereof *under the Curse of the Law*, bound over unto *Everlasting Death*, the deserved *Wa-*
Wa-

ges of Sin. We were such therefore as an incens'd Majesty had a just right to punish; nay such as the honour of his Justice seem'd concern'd to pursue; and in whose Perdition he might have glorify'd himself for ever.

His Love was therefore extended to us when most *Unworthy* of it; nay, when most *deserving* of his *just severity*.

And how marvellous Love was it that has thus overlook'd all our provoking Guilt, and magnify'd it self on all our Unworthiness and Mis-deserts! That there shou'd be Propensions to Pity in his Heart towards us, when we cou'd expect nothing but fiery Indignation from him! That instead of unsheathing the Sword of his Justice, to cut off such perverse Rebels, he shou'd form the project of reconciling us to himself! That while we stood before him as condemned Criminals before their injur'd Sovereign, his paternal Affections shou'd be mov'd towards us, and *Mercy shou'd rejoyce against Judgment* in his royal Breast! O how do's this tend to exalt the Glory of Divine Mercy and Love, and to render it most illustrious in our Eyes! O

mar -

marvellous Love of God extended to those that were not only undeserving of the least of his Mercies, but had rendered themselves fit *fuel* for the *flames* of his Vengeance! That has deriv'd Arguments of Pity from our self-procured Misery, and is now become the *Refuge*, not only of *forlorn* and *miserable*, but of *Sinful* and *Guilty* Creatures. So matchless is this *Love of God* that the inspir'd Pen-Men seem to have set apart the Name of *Grace* to represent it. The same favour is far greater in moral Consideration and Value, when bestow'd on an *Enemy*, than when confer'd on a *Friend*. And the more absolutely *undeserv'd* such a Favour is, the more shou'd it enhance and indear the Affection that bestows it. How great, how infinitely tender then was the Affection of a gracious God, who found us his *Enemies* at his Feet and in his Power, and yet instead of stretching forth his Hand to *Destroy* us, has extended it to *Recover* and *Save* us?

But farther.

2. As to our *Temper* and *Disposition*,
We loved not him, when he Loved us.

There

There was therefore no *Motive* or *Attractive* to his Love on our part but the contrary. His Love has entirely *prevented* our's, being entertain'd in his merciful Breast, before any penitent sense of our Guilt, or any ingenuous remorse for it, or any Inclination to return to our offended Father appear'd in our's. Tho' the *breach* begun wholly on our Part, yet the *project* of *Reconciliation* begun entirely on his. O infinite Love that has not only prevented our *Deserts*, but even our *Expectations* and *Desires*! O tender Bowels of Pity that thus yearned in the B. God towards us, whose Hearts were most unjustly alienated from him! Had we indeed upon the first Reflection on our unnatural Defection from him cast our selves in deep self-abasement at his Feet, lamented our Sins with penitential Tears; Had we in such a relenting Frame sued to him for Mercy, and return'd to our Incens'd Father with the dutiful Affection of Children; this might have render'd our *Case* the more *pitiable*: But alas! there was no such ingenuous Temper and Carriage on our part to recommend us to the Mercy of God; but on the contrary that most un-

reasonable Dis-inclination towards him, that might justly provoke him to abhor us. So every way *free* was the Love of God without any consideration in us to excite it : And no wonder indeed that it shou'd prevent ours, when it had its *rise* and *date* (if I may so speak) in the Eternal Counsels of God ; when at the same time that his omniscient Eye foresaw the *Misery* of our *fallen State*, His Wisdom and Mercy form'd the Design of our *Redemption* from it : And therefore we read of Christ's being *the Lamb of God slain* (in the Divine Counsel and Purpose) *from before the foundation of the World*, Rev. 13. 8.

Nay the *Love of God* is *enhanc'd* the more, when among other Creatures involv'd in Guilt and Ruin, as well as ourselves; he does by an act of *distinguishing Favour* select us to be the Objects of his Mercy. How much nobler Creatures were the *fallen Angels* ! How much more capable of glorifying God in the use of their most excellent Powers ! Yet they are remedilessly *cast down from their first Habitation* ; they are *reserv'd unto chains of darkness against the Judgment of the great Day*. There appears

God's Love in sending his
no such concern for the Recovery of
those once glorious Spirits. There is
no powerful *Hand* of Divine Mercy
stretch'd out to lay hold on their sinking
Nature, and to prevent their falling in-
to endless Perdition. But while they
are left in the Hands of inexorable Ju-
stice, we (that are by Nature so far be-
neath 'em) are regarded with a compas-
sionate Eye. Towards us an offended
God entertains Thoughts of Peace;
the extremity of our Danger excites his
sovereign Pity to appear for our Relief,
and prompts him to send a powerful Re-
deemer to *seek and save us* in our lost
Condition.

But that leads me,

III. To consider, what *Effect* this
Love of God has produc'd, or in what
remarkable *Instance* it was *Display'd*.
And the Text tells us, it was most emi-
nently shewn, *In sending his Son to be*
the Propitiation for our Sins.

And here every thing concurs to *En-
hance* and *Exalt* the Love of God, and
excite our magnifying Thoughts of it.

Let us then distinctly consider, the
Person he sent, the *Errand he sent him*
on, the *Benefits that thence redound to*
us,

Son to be our Propitiation. 501

us, and all concur to let off the greatness of his transcendent Love.

1. *For the Person sent, it was his Son.*

Now as *Christ* is the *Son of God* both in respect of his *Divine* and *Human* Nature, so this glorious Constitution of his *Person* is it felt a marvellous *Instance* of *Divine Love*. That the *only begotten Son of God* (as he is call'd in the v. before) shou'd become *the Son of Man*, that the *Eternal Word* shou'd be made *Flesh*, especially that he shou'd assume our Nature with a Design of becoming our *Propitiation* by his Sufferings in it; this is the most astonishing Condescension that ever was Express'd; and in this we may behold an *height and depth* of *Divine Love* far *surpassing our Knowledge*. The Condescension of *Divine Mercy* is herein so great and unusual, that some have made this an *Objection* against our *Belief* of it. But sure such have wrong *Notions* of the *Divine Majesty* and *Greatness*, who think it unworthy of so glorious a Being, to stoop so low for the *Relief* and *Recovery* of his perishing *Creatures*. 'Tis rather a most congruous Expression of his *boundless Love* to

use such marvellous *Condescension* in order to the saving the meanest of his reasonable Creatures, since *Greatness* and *Goodness* never appear with so amiable a Lustre as when they are found in the nearest *Conjunction*.

If we consider our *Lord Jesus* as *Man*; so he was on account of his *miraculous Conception, the Son of God*. And he has that Title also on the account of all those *god-like* and *amiable Qualities* that render'd him the brightest *Image of the Invisible God*. And much more do's that Title belong to him on the account of his sacred *Unction* to the *Offices of Prophet, Priest and King*. And accordingly 'tis justly observ'd, that to be the *Christ* (or the *Anointed*) and to be the *Son of God*, are often us'd as synonymous Expressions in the *New-Testament*. See *Mat. 16. 16.* compar'd with *Mark. 8. 27.* *Mat. 26. 63.* And *Christ* even consider'd as *Man*, was most dear unto God; he was his *well-beloved Son in whom he was well Pleased*. (As himself testify'd by a voice from Heaven, *Mat. 3. ult.*)

The *Dignity* then of the *Person sent* is a glorious display of *Divine Love* and

Son to be our Propitiation. 503

and indeed such as we durst never have imagin'd, had it not been reveal'd. What is it for the *Highest Angel* to assume the Nature of the *meanest Worm*. The *Distance* is only *Finite*, but here 'tis *Boundless and Infinite*. The *Nature of Angels* themselves is at as great a distance from the *Divine*, as *Finite* and *Infinite*. *Man* is far *inferiour* to *Angels*; and yet the *Son of God* took not on him the *Nature of Angels*, but the *Seed of Abraham*; Heb. 2. 16.

But,

2. We must here consider the *Errand* on which God sent his own Son, viz. To be the *Propitiation* for our *Sins*.

The Expression carries a plain *Allusion* to those *Expiatory Sacrifices* then us'd both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in which the *offender's Guilt* was suppos'd to be taken away by the *Life* of the *Beast* being given in lieu of his, and the *offended Deity* to be thereby *appeas'd* and render'd *Propitious* and *Favourable*. Now both the *Holy Scriptures* assure us, and our own reason it self declares to us, that those *Sacrifices* cou'd never *Expiate* the real guilt of *Sin*, by making any *Compensation* to the injur'd *Justice*.

504 *God's Love in sending his*
of God. There is nothing in the *Blood*
or *Life* of a *Beast* that shou'd render it
a *valuable Consideration* for the *Life* of
a *Man*. And this put the Heathens of-
ten in case of extraordinary Guilt on
making use of *human Sacrifices* as recko-
ning them more *valuable*, and capable
to *propitiate* their *offended Deities*. Hence
we may observe, the Prophet brings
in the distressed Sinner as proposing
(least other Sacrifices shou'd fail) *to give*
his first-born for his Transgression, and
the fruit of his Body, for the Sin of his
Soul, Micah 6. 6, 7, &c.

Now that God who had so long re-
quir'd those *Expiatory Sacrifices*, both
before and *under* the Law to preserve in
the World the belief and sense of his
punishing Justice, was pleas'd in the ful-
ness of Time to send his own Son to offer
such a *Sacrifice* as was every way capa-
ble to declare his *Righteousness* to the
guilty World, and to render our *Pardon*
manifestly consistent with the Glory of
it; such a *Sacrifice* as by entirely *Expia-*
ting the guilt of Sin, shou'd supersede
all those *legal Sacrifices* that were only
the *Types and Figures* of this; such a
Sacrifice as was a most *valuable Consi-*
deration

Son to be our Propitiation. 505

deration for our *Impunity* and *Forgiveness*.

And in order to the Son of God's becoming such a *Propitiation* or *Expiatory Sacrifice*; it was requisite, that he shou'd *substitute* Himself in our *place* and *stead*; that our *Iniquities* shou'd be *laid on Him*, and he undergo a *vicarious Punishment*, his *Life* being given as the *Ransom* for our's. It was requisite, that he shou'd endure all those *Sufferings* in his *sacred Body*, and all those *Agonies* in his *innocent Soul*, that were fit to manifest the *hainous demerit of Sin*, and the just *Indignation* of an incens'd God against it. He was oblig'd in order hereto, to bear the *Pain* and *Shame* of the *Cross*, there *making his Soul an offering for Sin*, and *shedding his precious Blood* to obtain the *Remission* of it. Such an *Expiatory Sacrifice* the *Justice* of God demanded for the *Reparation* of its injur'd *Honour*. And such a costly *Sin-offering* was the *Son of God* ordain'd to be by the *special Command* and *Appointment* of the *Father*, 2 Cor. v. 5. ult.

Now this was a most convincing *Proof* and unparallel'd *Instance* of the *Father's Love*.

506 *God's Love in sending his*

For herein the Love of God to us seem'd to counteract and control the tender *Affection* he bare to his own Son. If God said of *Abraham*, *Now I know that thou fearest me, in that thou hast not with-held thy Son, thy only Son from me*, Gen. 22. 12. How much more may we say of him on this occasion, *Now we know that thou Lovest us in that thou hast not with-held thy Son, thy only Son from us*. His infinite Love cou'd not have bestow'd a more *invaluable* Gift upon us, than his *only begotten Son*; and he cou'd not give him to us in a manner more Expressive of his matchless Love, than by giving him to be our *Sin-offering* and *Propitiation*. Nay so transcendent was the pitty of God to us, that in order to his *sparing us*, he *spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all*, Rom. 8. 12. Nay his Compassion to us made him as it were turn a deaf Ear to the earnest Request of his own Son, *that if possible that Cup might pass from him*. And O what an amazing Instance of Love is it, that an offended Majesty shou'd thus give up the *Son of his Love* to become an *attoning Sacrifice* and *Propitiation* for his *Enemies*

Son to be our Propitiation. 507

nemies themselves! That our Guilt shou'd by his appointment be transferr'd on the Head of this Lamb of God, and his inestimable Life be offer'd for the Redemption of our's. That the Prince of Life, and the Lord of Glory shou'd by his ordination be expos'd to the Agonies of Death, to the Pain and Shame of the Cross, to save such vile and worthless Wretches from Everlasting Contempt and Misery! O how unwilling was he to execute upon us the Punishment due to our Iniquities, when he thus laid'em on his own Son! And how intent was he on our Redemption and Salvation, when it pleas'd him to bruise this dearest Object of his Love, that by his Stripes and Wounds we might be Healed! This is an Instance of Love, which if it had not been clearly reveal'd we cou'd never have imagin'd or believ'd, and which when reveal'd we cannot comprehend the Greatness of. 'Tis the wonder of the Holy Angels, and much more shou'd it be marvellous in our Eyes.

Once more.

3. Let us consider the *Benefits* that redound to us from *the Son of God's being*

508 *God's Love in sending his*

ing the Propitiation for our Sins. And this Consideration will farther Enhance the Love of God in this marvellous Instance of it.

And indeed, as the Love of God cou'd not bestow a greater Gift upon us, nor provide a more costly and invaluable Sacrifice for us, than that of his own Son; so we cou'd not reap more inestimable Benefits, than what that Sacrifice has procur'd. What greater thing cou'd the Son of God obtain for us, by his offering himself without spot to the Father, than Eternal Redemption? What cou'd the precious Sacrifice of the Lamb of God do more, than take away the Sin of the World? How glorious an Effect was it of his becoming a Curse for us, that he has redeem'd us from the Curse of the Law? How excellent a Fruit is it of his being the Propitiation for our Sins; that he is now our powerful Advocate with the Father, and able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, since he ever lives to make Intercession for us? What greater and nobler Effects cou'd his Sacrifice produce, than the Vindication of God's injur'd Law and Justice; the removing all those ob-
stacles

Son to be our Propitiation. 509

stacles that his Justice laid in the way of his Mercy, and opening to us all the *Treasures of Grace and Glory*, obtaining for us all the *Blessings of the everlasting Covenant*? For the Apostle justly reasons in this Case, *He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all; How much more will he not with him freely give us all Things*? And we may well suppose that the *Designs* of his Love to us must be *Glorious and Great*; when they were to be brought about by so *astonishing and costly means* as the *extreme Sufferings and Death* of his own Son. The *Blessings* he intended to bestow must be *Invaluable* indeed, when such a *price* as the *Blood* of his own Son must be paid to obtain 'em.

And O how transcendent is the *Love of God* that carries on so merciful Intentions towards us, that has such a *Salvation* to bestow upon us, as so valuable a Consideration must be offer'd to procure? How do's his Love in the *Breadth* of it (in its *Extensive Fruits*) and in the *Length* of it (the *endless Duration* of the *Blessings* he bestows) transcend all our *Thoughts and Comprehension*!

All

510 *God's Love in sending his*

All the *Use* I shall at present suggest of the foregoing Discourse, is to call you to more frequent Contemplation of the Love of God, (especially in this transcendent Instance of it.

And this is an Exercise very suitable for those of us that have solately beheld the lively Representation of it.

We shou'd be far from confining our Thoughts of it to that Holy Ordinance we have attended upon. That Love will be (we hope) the Subject of our everlasting Praises. And sure it shou'd now have a considerable share in our Delightful Meditations. Especially in our's, that claim an Interest in that propitiatory Sacrifice which the Son of God was sent to offer, and hope to partake of all the inestimable Fruits of it?

What were we once but *Enemies* and *Rebels*, alienated from God, and destitute of any filial Dispositions towards him, obnoxious to his Justice, under his Righteous Curse, and liable every moment to the Execution of it?

But now, we that were *afar off*, are brought nigh. We that were *Enemies* by wicked Works are now *Reconcil'd*. We that

Son to be our Propitiation. 5; 1.

that were *guilty Criminals* are now *adopted Children*. And we that were *Heirs of Hell*, are now made *Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life*.

And this blessed Change is brought about by so amazing a Transaction as *God's sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins*. He was *charg'd* with our *Guilt* in order to our merciful *Abso-lution* and *Discharge*. On him our *Iniquities* were laid, that they might not be *imputed to us*. On him was the *Chastisement of our Peace*, that thro' his *Stripes* we might be *Heal'd*. Against him was the *Sword of Vindictive Justice* turn'd, which *wounded Him for our Transgressions*, that *pardoning Mercy* might stream to us thro' his *Bleeding Wounds*.

And the *Love of God* was the *spring* of this astonishing gracious *Dispensation*. To that we owe the first *contrivance* of this glorious *Design*. To that we must ascribe it, that the *Son of God* came upon that compassionate *Undertaking* and *Errand*. He came in his *Sufferings* and *Sacrifice* to accomplish the great Purposes of *Divine Wisdom* and *Grace*.

512 *God's Love in sending his &c:*

Grace. For our Lord Jesus came not to make any *Change* in the *Divine Nature*, but only to make a *Change* in the *Case and State of Fallen Man*, by offering to the Justice of God a valuable Consideration for our Impunity and Salvation. And 'twas in compliance with the *Father's Will*, and in pursuance of his compassionate Design, that he became our *propitiatory Sin-offering*. His *Love* therefore must be chiefly Ey'd and Ador'd by us, as the *Fountain and Source* of all these glorious *Transactions*, in order to our *Redemption and Salvation*. Sure then the *Love of God* deserves our most frequent and attentive *Contemplation here*, which we hope to reap the blessed *Fruits* of, to all Eternity.

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F I N I S.

ON THE
LOVE
OF
GOD,

In sending his Son to be our Propitiation.

SERM. II.

On 1 JOHN Chap. 4. Verse. x.

Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. ———

I Have in a former *Discourse* on these Words, treated on the excellent Subject contain'd in 'em, viz.

That

514 *God's Love in sending his*

That 'tis a transcendent and unparallel'd Instance of Love, that when we lov'd not God, he lov'd us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

In speaking thereto, I

First, Consider'd this *Love of God*, and shew'd 'tis to be understood of his *Love of Compassion and Good-will*, not of his *Love of Complacency and Delight*, being extended to us *when we lov'd not him*.

I then,

Secondly, Consider'd what the Text suggests to enhance this *Love of God*, and to represent it as *Great and Unparallel'd*.

To that purpose I consider'd,

I. In *whose* Breast it was Entertain'd, viz. In that of the B. God who has no need of us, and can receive no Benefit from us; nay who was highly Provok'd and Injur'd by us.

II. *To whom* this Love was extended, and under what Character we were Consider'd.

It was extended to us, who *below* the Divine Notice as *despicable Creatures*,
un-

Son to be our Propitiation. 515

unworthy of his favourable regard as being *perverse Enemies and Rebels*, and such as needed an expiatory Sacrifice. It was extended for our Relief when the fallen Angels were past by, and abandoned to remediless irrecoverable Ruin.

It was extended to us *when we loved not him*; and consequently when there was no Motive to his pity on our part. But on the contrary every thing that might expose us to his just abhorrence and vindictive Wrath.

III. I consider'd this *Instance* wherein the Love of God displayed it self, *The sending his Son &c.*

And here I considered the Dignity of the *Person* sent, his Son, his *only begotten Son* (as he is called in the foregoing verse:) *The Errand* he was sent upon, viz. *To be the Propitiation for our Sins*, which includes his Substitution of himself in our place and stead, and all the stupendious Sufferings he under-went in order to expiate the guilt of Sin by the most awful Declaration of God's vindictive Justice against it. And lastly, the unspeakable *Benefits* that redound to us from his thus *becoming the Propitiation for our Sins.*

516 *God's Love in sending his*

All these *Considerations* concur to *enhance* the Love of God, and to represent it as *Transcendent* and *Unparallel'd*.

I now proceed to make some practical *Improvement* and *Application* of this important Subject: And,

I. We may for our Instruction here infer, that this *love of God's* being extended to us *when we Lov'd not him*, is every way *consistent* with his *Son's* being the *Propitiation* (or Expiatory Sacrifice) for our *Sins*.

This I the rather take Notice of, because it shews the *Weakness* and *Vanity* of that *Objection* (or rather *Cavil*) which the Patrons of the *Socinian* Cause advance against the *Satisfaction of Christ*, viz. That 'tis inconsistent with the Declarations which the B. God so frequently makes of his *Love to sinful Mankind*.

For (say they) " If the Scriptures
 " testify, That God so loved us, even
 " when consider'd as *Sinners* and *Enemies*, what need was there of any *Satisfaction to his Justice*, of any proper Expiatory Sacrifice to appease his
 " Wrath, and restore us to his Favour?
 " Since he was inclineable to pitty
 " and forgive; What needed there more
 " than

Son to be our Propitiation. 517

“ than our sincere *Repentance* to make
“ us capable Objects of his *Pardon* and
“ *Acceptance*? How cou’d we be at once
“ the Objects of his *Anger* and *Love*?
“ And since we were the Objects of his
“ *Love* already, what occasion was there
“ of any compensation to his Justice to
“ render us so?

Answer. This *Objection* plainly arises from their not duly distinguishing between God’s *Love of Compassion* and *Pitty*, and that of his *Approbation* and *Delight*. Now the same Person may be at once the object of his *Pitty*, and yet the object of his just *Displeasure*. The consistency of these two different Affections is very obvious in human Government. A gracious Prince may compassionate a rebellious Subject, who yet stands *Condemned by the Law of the Land* for his *Crimes*, and is obnoxious to publick Justice. And there may be a struggle in his Breast between his *Regard* to the *Honour* of the *Law*, his *Concern* to maintain his *Authority* and to deter others from the like *Crimes*, and his *pitty* to this or that particular *Offender*. His *pitty* to an *obnoxious Criminal* may incline him to *pardon* and restore him to

518 *God's Love in sending his*

Favour ; and yet his *concern* for the *honour* and *safety* of his own Government may render him unwilling to do it without some *Expedient*, some *valuable Consideration* that may vindicate his Authority from Contempt. The known Instance of *Zaleucus* is pertinently enough alledg'd to this purpose ; who having by a Law made *Adultery* punishable with the *loss* of *both* the offender's *Eyes*, and his *own Son* being found guilty ; he had so great a *regard to the Law*, that he wou'd not wholly remit the Punishment ; and yet he had that *pitty to his Son*, that he put out only *one* of his *Eyes*, and in lieu of the *other* put out *one of his own*, that none of his Subjects might from this Instance of Clemency hope for Impunity. Here was *Justice* temper'd with *Clemency* and *Pitty*. There is something *Parallel* hereto in the Divine Government, and this amazing Transaction of it. The guilty race of Mankind are fallen under the righteous *Curse* of God's Holy Law. *Justice* demands the *Execution of the Sentence*. The bowels of Divine *Pitty* yearn over the miserable Case of the guilty Offenders, and render him incline-
able

able to pardon 'em upon any Terms consistent with the Honour of his injur'd Justice. But his Concern to maintain the Reputation of his Law, to keep up the reverence of his Authority, and to deter all other his intelligent Creatures from the like Disobedience, render him averse thereto, without some such publick display of his just Severity against the Sins of Men, as may answer these Ends of his Wise and Holy Government. His *Wisdom* finds out such an *Expedient* for the publick Declaration of his vindictive Justice in the *Sufferings of his own Son*, voluntarily *substituting* himself in the place of *guilty Sinners*, and becoming their *Sin-offering and Propitiation*. And his *Mercy* inclines him to accept of this *valuable Consideration* for our *Impunity*. His tender propension to pity and spare us, inclines him not to *spare his own Son*, but *freely to deliver him up for us all*, Rom. 8. 32. His *Justice* insists upon and accepts a *Sacrifice of infinite Value*, as an *Attonement* for us; and his *Mercy* prompts him to *provide* that *Sacrifice* for us when we cou'd provide none for our selves. That such a costly *Sacrifice* as the *Son of God*, shou'd be offer'd in order

520 *God's Love in sending his*

to our Remission, is owing to the Demands that Justice made for the reparation of it's injur'd honour; That *he* shou'd be sent on this compassionate Errand of becoming our *Propitiation*, we entirely owe it to the transcendent Love and *Pity* of a compassionate tho' offended Father. So that a *satisfaction to Divine Justice* was so far from being inconsistent with his Love, that the former was necessary to accomplish and bring about the merciful Designs of the latter. And tho' *Justice requir'd* such a *Satisfaction*, yet it was infinite Love that provided it for us.

But farther,

II. This *Instance* of the marvellous Love of God in sending his Son to be the *Propitiation for our Sins*, shou'd *Establiss* and *confirm* our belief of Gods *vindictive Justice*.

For had not the *vindictive Justice* of God lay'd a strong Barr in the way of our Pardon and Forgiveness, there had been no need of so costly a Means of obtaining it as the Son of God's becoming the *Propitiation for our Sins*. The Affection which our heavenly Father bears to him who is called his *only begotten*,
his

Son to be our Propitiation. 52:

his dear his well beloved Son, wou'd have sufficiently dissuaded him from exposing this object of his highest Love to such a Scene of amazing Sufferings, if they they had been no way needful to expiate the guilt of Sin, and to render the forgiveness of it consistent with the honour of his Justice and Government. We may then from this most unparallel'd Transaction not only infer, that *God is Love*, but that he is a *Being* of spotless *Purity* and *Righteousness* too. That he is *Just* even when he is the gracious *Justifier* of those that believe in his *Incarnate Son*, and embrace the offers of Divine Mercy thro' him. We must not then overlook this awful *Declaration* that God has made of his *righteousness* to the guilty World, but get our Minds deeply possess'd with the most lively Apprehensions of it, Rom. 3. 25, 26. We must regard *punitive Justice* as an essential Perfection of the Divine Nature. But then by *vindictive Justice* we do not mean (as many *Socinian Writers* wretchedly mis-represent the matter) a desire of *Revenge* in God consider'd as meerly the injur'd Party, and a *Delight* in the *Sufferings* of the Offender as a gratifica-

522 *God's Love in sending his*
tion of *that desire of Revenge*. Far be
it from us to entertain such unworthy
Apprehensions of that infinitely *Graci-*
ous and *perfect* Being. But we mean
God's inclination to manifest his hatred of
Sin, by the severity of it's Punishment.
His Concern to preserve the honour of
his Laws, and to vindicate his Authori-
ty from Contempt, and to discounte-
nance the *Violation* of his Commands
by the *Punishment* thereof. And of this
Inclination the B. God has given the
clearest Demonstration to the World in
his refusing to pardon penitent Offen-
ders themselves without the *Interposal*
of a most costly invaluable Sacrifice for
the expiation of their Guilt: And he
will yet give a more terrible Demonstra-
tion of it in the remediless Execution
of the Sentence of his Law against all
the Impenitent Rejecters of his offer'd
Mercy. O let us then carry a deep Sense
and Impression of his *Justice* as well as
Goodness engraven upon our Hearts.
Let us consider these two Perfections as
equally belonging to the Divine Nature,
and appearing with an entire *Harmony*
in the Administration of his Govern-
ment. The *Highest* and most *unparal-*
lel'd

let'd *Act* of Divine Love carrys along with it the most *awful* and *matchless* Instance of his *inflexible* and *tremendous* Justice. He shew'd his Love to us in giving his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. But,

III. I wou'd hence apply my self to those of you that are *devoyd* of the Love of God, and consequently in a State of *Enmity* against him, notwithstanding this marvellous Love he has Express'd to you in sending his Son to be the propitiation for your Sins.

And from this Consideration, I wou'd if possible, *shame* you out of your unreasonable Dis-affection to him, and invite you to a penitent Return to him, and thankful Acceptance of his offer'd Mercy.

First, I wou'd if possible, *shame* you out of your unreasonable Dis-affection to God.

'Tis indeed a most monstrous and unnatural Thing, that a reasonable Soul shou'd be under such a wretched Dis-affection to the Father of Spirits whole Off-spring it is.

That

524 *God's Love in sending his*

That it shou'd be possessed with a cursed *Enmity* to the *best* and most *amiable* of all Beings ! That it shou'd *not love him* in whom all those adorable *Perfections* are found that are the proper *attractives* of *rational Love* ! But O how hainous Aggravation of your guilt is it, *not to love him* whose Love has so freely *prevented* yours ! *Not to love him*, that has extended his Love to you when absolutely *unworthy* of it, and given you the highest Demonstration possible of his *tenderest Love*, even when you might reasonably have expected and feared the utmost severity of his *Justice* ! O what a *Monster of Ingratitude* must thy Soul be, when such astonishing Love can make no genuine Impression upon it ! What an *obdurate Heart* must thine be that such matchless and surprizing Pitty cannot melt into *filial Affection* towards such an infinitely *gracious Father* ! O blush, O *tremble* to think, that ever thy base and disingenuous heart shou'd mantain such an unaccountable *Aversion* to him, who is *drawing thee to himself* by such (as one wou'd think) irresistible *cords of Love* ! O dread to think that his most *undeserved Love* shou'd meet with

no other requital on thy part than the most *undeserved Enmity*! Methinks the very Consideration of it shou'd fill thee with just *confusion* and *self-aborrence*, and shou'd carry into thy Conscience deep convictions of the *desperate wickedness of thine own heart*, that is thus *proof* against the most powerful *Incentives* of *Divine Love*. What wou'dst thou thy self think of an *ungrateful Rebel*, who is not capable of being won by the most condescending Expressions and Proofs of his *Princes Clemency* and *Pitty* (even when he lyes at his Mercy) to be reconciled to him, and lay down his most unreasonable *Hostility* against him? And yet such, nay infinitely worse and more inexcusable is thy Temper and Behaviour towards an infinitely *gracious God*. O pursue these serious Thoughts till thy Heart begin to relent, and till thou feelest some Motions of *filial Affection* towards such a *compassionate Father* kindled in thy Breast.

But,

Secondly, I wou'd farther *invite* all such of you to a *penitent Return to God*, and *thankful Acceptance* of his offer'd *Mercy*.

And

526 *God's Love in sending his*

And this is indeed the genuine Improvement you shou'd make of God's marvellous *Love of Pity*, in *sending his Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins*.

And to enforce this *Exhortation*; let me beseech you to consider.

1. You stand in *infinite need* of that *Pardon and Forgiveness* which the *Son of God* has *obtain'd* by becoming the *Propitiation for your Sins*.

You are *guilty Offenders*, under the *Arrest* of Divine Justice, under the *Curse* of his Holy Law, and every moment liable to the Execution of that condemning Sentence it has past upon you. The *avenger of Blood* is on his Way, and has you in continual *Pursuit*. There is but (for any thing you know) *a step* between you and Everlasting Death. You are only *Repriev'd* from remediless Destruction by the arbitrary forbearance of God, which he may the next *Month or Week or Day* put an end to, and then your Case is *Hopeless* and *Desperate* for ever: And shall a condemn'd Criminal *slight and despise*, or shall he *dally and trifle with* the offers of that Forgiveness which cost such an inestimable Ransom to obtain?

2. Con-

Son to be our Propitiation. 527

2. Consider God has therefore *sent his Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins*, that he might in consistency with the Honour of his own Justice, *make such offers of Mercy to you.*

You ought therefore to regard these proposals of Pardon and Peace to returning Penitents as the *purchase of the Redeemer's Blood*, and the admirable *Fruits of Divine Pity and Love*. The B. God has been at all this Expence in repairing and vindicating the Honour of his own Justice, that he might without any stain on the Glory thereof, set on foot this blessed *Treaty of Reconciliation and Peace*; that he might open a way for the free Exercise of Mercy, and that his *Throne of Grace* might be *Accessible* to all penitent Offenders. And therefore to turn a deaf Ear to his tenders of Mercy, is as much as lies in you to *frustrate* his compassionate *Design* in *sending his Son to be your Propitiation*, and to render his *Sacrifice In-effectual* and *Fruitless*. And sure you cannot offer a greater *Affront* to his Love than this. You cannot more effectually express your profane Contempt of it, than by *slighting the offers of that Pardon which he has*
sent

528 *God's Love in sending his*
sent his *Son* to procure by so *inestimable*
a *Price* as that of his own *Blood*.

3 Consider what *Encouragement* you
have to *return* by the fullest *assurance*
of *Pardon* upon your *accepting* the rea-
sonable *Terms* of it.

For if the *Love* of God so far extend-
ed to you *when you lov'd not him*, as
to give his own *Son* to be the *Propitiati-*
on for your *Sins*; how freely and readi-
ly will he receive you into his favour
when you with *filial Affection* and Re-
morse return to him?

And what can reasonably discour-
age you from doing so?

Is it *the Greatness of your Sins*? how
can that obstruct your *Forgiveness* up-
on your serious *Repentance*, when the
prospect of it did not prevent God's
sending his own Son to expiate your
Guilt? And he was sent to obtain *Sal-*
vation even for the *chief of Sinners*. His
precious blood can wash away *Sins* of the
deepest stain and dye. His *Sacrifice* can
atone even for those *hainous Offences*
for which there was *no Sacrifice* pro-
vided or allowed by the *Law of Mo-*
ses. Acts. 13. 39. And the offers of
Divine Grace made on the account of
his

Son to be our Propitiation. 529

his Propitiatory Sacrifice, exclude none from Forgiveness but such as by wilful *Unbelief* or *Impenitency* exclude themselves.

Art thou discouraged from the awful Apprehensions and Dread of the *Sin-avenging Justice* of God ?

'Tis true that *Justice* might have quashed all thy hopes and driven thee to despair, if thy *Pardon* were indeed *inconsistent* with it. But a gracious God has removed this obstacle by providing a full Satisfaction to his *Justice* that has accorded the Interests thereof with those of his *Mercy*. So that Divine *Justice* has now no *objection* to make no *Plea* to offer in *Barr* to the Exercise of his *Mercy*. Thou may'st justly plead with thy self, Has the blessed God been at such Expence to reconcile that Exercise of his *Mercy* to the Penitent with the honour of his *Justice*, and will he deny a share in his *Mercy* to a contrite relenting Sinner, that humbly and earnestly implores it? Was he so unwilling to exercise his *Justice* in the deserved *Condemnation* of Sinners, as to provide so costly a *Sin-offering* to expiate their guilt,

530 *God's Love in sending his*

guilt, and will he remedilessly expose those to it who with a penitent heart flee to his infinite Mercy as their Sanctuary thro' the Mediation of his Son, whom he himself *hath set forth to be a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood*, Rom. 3. 25? Will he that *spared not his own Son* that he might *spare us*, turn a deaf Ear to the cry's of a *returning Prodigal* for that *Mercy*, which he has been at so vast Expence to make way for the free and full dispensation of?

You have therefore no reason to think that you have to do with an *inexorable Enemy* whom no Intreaties can move, or with an *implacable Sovereign* whose pity and favour is not to be gained by the most penitent Submission. Had you any such *Plea* as this, it wou'd in some degree lessen the guilt of your obstinate continuance in Sin. But your Case is quite contrary. Tho' you have rendered yourselves justly *vile* in the Eyes of God, as *perverse Sinners*, yet you are not shut out of that Pity that he bears to you as his *distressed Creatures*. Tho' you have incensed his Justice he has provided

ded a *Sacrifice of Attonement*. Tho' you have deserv'd to die, he has sent his own Son to lay down his inestimable *Life* as the *Ransom* of your's. Tho' you are under the condemning Sentence of his Law, he has publish'd a *royal Act of Indemnity and Pardon* to all that thro' this B. Redeemer *come to him*. So that if you perish in your unpardon'd Guilt, 'tis because you under-valued that Blood that has obtain'd Forgiveness ; 'tis because you spurn at that Mercy that offers it, 'tis because you will not earnestly sue for it, and dutifully comply with the reasonable Terms on which its offer'd ; 'tis because you will not *renounce* those *Sins* which a gracious God is so ready to *Forgive* ; nor subject your selves to his rightful Authority, who is so willing on that condition to readmit you to his Favour and Love.

And therefore let me add.

4. Consider, *That inexorable Justice will take place on all who reject God's gracious offers of Mercy and Forgiveness.*

You have already hear'd , that *Justice* is as *Essential* a Perfection of the

532 *God's Love in sending his*

Divine Nature as *Mercy*. And that God's Justice wou'd not admit of the Pardon of the truly Penitent, without the intervention of the Sufferings and and Death of his own Son as their *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation*. How remedilessly then will all penitent Sinners be expos'd to it's avenging Stroke for ever! That Justice that *spar'd not the dear Son of God* when standing in our Place and Stead, will much less spare the obstinate Transgressors of his holy Law. *If these things were done to the green Tree, what shall be done to the dry?* Luke 23. 31. To all such hardned Contemners of his Authority, even our God will prove a consuming Fire, Heb. 12. ult. And all such have the greater reason to expect it, because their perverse opposition to God's Authority is aggravated by their Contempt of his infinite Mercy. They trample not only on his Sovereignty, but on his Clemency and Love. They spurn at those very Bowels of Pity that yearn over 'em to prevent their endless Perdition. They offer the highest Affront, not only to the Majesty of God, but to his transcendent Grace, by rejecting the most compassionate Offers that ever

Son to be our Propitiation. 533

ever the offended Sovereign of Heaven made to his rebellious Creatures. And such as thus scornfully slight the forgiving Mercy of God, will fall the more unpitied Sacrifice to his Justice. If those Coals of Fire, that Divine Compassion now heaps on the Heads of Sinners, do not melt 'em into Repentance, they will the more terribly Consume 'em. None will sink lower into Hell and Damnation, than the obstinate Despisers of Mercy and Salvation.

And O that this were more seriously consider'd by all such as have hitherto turn'd a deaf Ear to all God's gracious Overtures of Pardon and Reconciliation ! O that all such wou'd in this their day of Grace mind the things that belong to their (Eternal) Peace before they be (remedilessly) hid from their Eyes !

But,

IV. I wou'd hence Apply my self to all those of you who have by Faith fled to the Son of God as your Propitiation, and are, upon your penitent Return to God, restored to his Favour.

And to such there are several Advices that my Text do's naturally Suggest. As

534 *God's Love in sending his*

I Often contemplate that Love of God that has so far extended to you when you lov'd not him, as to send his Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins.

We shou'd be far from confining our Thoughts of it to that *Holy Ordinance* we have this day attended on. That *Love of God* (we hope) will be the Noble *Theme* of our everlasting *Praises* above; and sure it shou'd have a considerable share in our delightful *Meditations* here below. Especially in our's who claim an *Interest* in that propitiatory Sacrifice which the Son of God was sent to offer and hope to partake of all the inestimable *Fruits* of it.

We may remember the time when we were perverse *Enemies* and *Rebels* against God, devoyd of any *filial disposition* towards him, possessed with a wretched and most unreasonable *Enmity* against him, obnoxious to his *Justice* but insensible of our danger, and no way inclined to sue for *Pardon* and *Peace*. And yet then was the compassionate *Eye* of God fixed upon us. Then did his *Bowels* of *Pitty* move towards us. Upon this prospect of
our

Son to be our Propitiation, 535

our wretched State did an infinitely gracious God form the project of reconciling us to himself, and in pursuance of that merciful design, sent his Son to be Propitiation for us.

But now we that were *afar off* are brought nigh. We that were once Enemies by wicked works are now reconcil'd. We that were under the Curse are now blessed with all spiritual and heavenly Blessings. We that were condemned, are now acquitted and absolved. We that were Children of wrath and Heirs of Hell are now the adopted Children of God and Heirs according to the hope of Eternal Life.

And this blessed change is brought about by so amazing a Transaction as God's sending his Son to be the propitiation for our Sins. On him our Iniquities were lay'd that they might not be imputed to us. From him was our punishment exacted that we might be acquitted and absolved. Against him the Sword of vindictive Justice was turned which shed his Blood, and pierced into his Soul, that he being wounded for our Transgressions Pardoning Mercy might stream to us thro' his bleeding

536 *God's Love in sending his Wounds.* We were the *Sheep* that had gone astray, every one after his own wretched way, But this *Lamb of God* bare, that he might take away the *Sins of the World.* John 1. 29.

And 'tis the *Love of the Father* that we must regard as the *Spring* of this astonishingly gracious dispensation. The *Son of God* was sent by him on this compassionate Errand and Design. For our Lord *Jesus* came not to make any change in the *Divine Nature*; but only to make an happy change in the *State of our Case.* He came to offer to the injured Justice of God, a *valuable consideration* for our *impunity.* But he did this in compliance with the *Fathers Will*, and in pursuance of his compassionate design of restoring us to his *Favour.* His *Love* therefore must be chiefly Ey'd and adored by us, as the *Fountain and Source* of this glorious and wonderful Transaction in order to our *Redemption and Salvation.*

2. *Let us improve our Meditations on this transcendent Instance of the Love of God, in order to the increasing our ardent Love to him.*

And

Son to be our Propitiation. 537

And indeed if there be any winning attractive Power in *Love*, if the most undeserved and sovereign Mercy can make any lasting *Impressions* on an ingenuous heart; sure the unparallel'd Love of God must kindle some reciprocal Affection in us, and our Hearts must *flame* with divine Love, when by serious Meditation, we set these powerful *Incentives* of it before our Eyes. In thus giving his dearest Son to dye for us, he has *purchased* a Title to our *highest Love*, at the *dearest Price*. And if our Love shou'd bear some proportion to the *Discoveries* and *Communications* of his, to what an unconceivable height shou'd it be raised! Where can we behold the Love of God more gloriously displayed, than in the Agonies of his dying Son, when he was made our *Sin offering*? And what greater *Blessings* can his Love communicate to us, than those that are the *Fruits* and *purchase* of his Blood? The *dying Son* of God is the clearest *Mirror* and liveliest *Image* of Divine Love, in its greatest condescension, that was ever presented to the View of the World. God has in this Transaction engraven it, as it were, in Capital Letters, *that he is Love* 1

538 · God's Love in sending his

John 4. 16. And how shou'd the Sight and Contemplation hereof, *transform us into Love*! How shou'd a *superlative Affection* to the B. God reign in our *Hearts*, and exercise a sovereign Dominion there, powerfully prompting us on all occasions to *think* and *speak* and *act* as this Divine Principle dictates to us. And verily those never truly believ'd or duly consider'd this Instance of the matchless Love of God, who never felt a warm sense of their infinite Obligations to him imprinted in their Hearts. Methinks we cannot view this transcendent Love of God without *blushing* at, and *lamenting* the woful Defects of our *own*. The sight of it must needs convince us, how deeply we are bound to *love him, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Strength, and Mind.*

2. Let us improve this Instance of the Love of God extended to us, when we loved not him, as an Encouragement to expect from him all that is necessary to our consummate Salvation.

This is an Inference which the Apostle Paul often reaches us to draw from these Premisses. For thus he reasons, *If God spared not his own Son, but delivered*
red

Son to be our Propitiation. 539

red him up for us all, how much more will he not with him freely give us all Things, Rom. 8. 32. What Blessings will he with-hold or deny, who has not with-held his Son, his only Son from us? What other Gift will he refuse to bestow, that has already confer'd this inestimable One? Nay he that freely deliver'd him up, when his affection to him might have created the greatest Reluctancy and Aversion thereto, will much more freely give those other Blessings which the gracious propension of his own Nature inclines him to bestow? To the same purpose the Apostle reasons elsewhere, Rom. 5. 8, 9, 10. Having told us, That God has commended his Love to us, in that while we were Sinners Christ dyed for us; he adds, Much more then being justified by his Blood, shall we be sav'd from Wrath thro' him. For if when we were Enemies, we were reconcil'd to God by the Death of the Son, much more being reconcil'd shall we be saved by his Life. If God's love of Pitty cou'd move him to send his Son to be our Propitiation when we lov'd not him, what will not his Love of Complacency prompt him to bestow, when by Loving him

we

540 *God's Love in sending his*

we are become the happy *Objects* thereof. If he extended such *Mercy* to us when we were consider'd as his *perverse Enemies*; what may we not expect when we are become his *reconciled and adopted Children*. If then he gave us *the Son of his Love*, how much more will he now give us the *Inheritance of his Children*. For now there is no *Obstacle* to his Love on his part. He has therefore made his *Son our Propitiation*, that all the *Blessings* of his everlasting *Covenant* might the more freely *flow* to us thro' his attoning *Blood*. We have therefore all *Encouragment* to expect; that he will accomplish all those glorious *Designs* of his *Grace and Love*, of which he has laid the *Foundation* in the *Sufferings and Sacrifice* of his own *Son*.

4. *Let us improve this Instance of the Love of God in sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins, in order to the tempering our Love of God with a filial Reverence and Dread of him*

For God has taken care in this glorious *Transaction*, to display his *Justice and Mercy* in so admirable a *Conjunction and Harmony*, that the one may *command our reverential Awe*, as well

Son to be our Propitiation: 541

as the other excite our ingenuous Love. And these two Graces are so far from being inconsistent that they never thrive so well as in an happy Union and Mixture. There is (thro' this Propitiation) forgiveness with God, that he may be Fear'd, Pf. 130. 3. He appears in this Dispensation inflexibly Just and Righteous, and therefore to be greatly Dreaded, and yet infinitely Gracious; and therefore to be Lov'd. In his Severity towards his innocent Son when our Substitute and Surety, even our God appears as a consuming Fire, and therefore to be serv'd with Reverence and godly Fear, Heb. 12. 28, 29. But in his dealings with us for his sake, he appears to be infinite and boundless Love, and therefore the proper Object of our most ardent Affections. Even the Relation of Children that raises us to so chearful an Affiance in him, must not lessen but increase our profound Veneration for him; even when we call him our Father, we must take care to pass the Time of our sojourning here in Fear; considering that we were not Redeem'd from the Guilt of our vain Conversation, by such corruptible Things, as Silver and Gold, but by
the

542 *God's Love in sending his
the precious Blood of Christ as a Lamb
without Spot or Blemish, 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.*

5. *Let this Instance of God's Love
to us, when we lov'd not him, teach us
that Excellent Duty of loving our Ene-
mies themselves.*

We are not indeed oblig'd to Love
'em with a Love of *Approbation and De-
light* while they continue our unrea-
sonable *Enemies*; that were to approve
their *Malice*. And God did not
thus Love us when we were his *Enemies*.
But we ought to carry in our Breasts to-
wards 'em a love of *Pitty and good Will*
that will incline us to do good to them
that hate us, and to pray for them that
despitefully use us, and render us easily
Reconcilable to 'em upon any credible
profession of their *Repentance*. And,
tho' this be a Duty that corrupt Na-
ture carries a strong Aversion to, yet;
sure the Consideration of this matchless
Love of God extended to us while
in our State of Enmity and Rebelli-
on against him, shou'd have a power-
ful influence to engage us to it. Did
the Blessed God not only cause His
Sun to shine, and His Rain to descend

on

Son to be our Propitiation. 543

on us, but His *own Son to Dye for us*, while we were *Unthankful and Evil*; and shall we think much to express our *beneficent Love* towards our *injurious Fellow-Creatures*? Shall we be backward to *overcome their Evil with our Good*? Where is that amiable, that God-like *Benignity and Goodness* that shou'd Evidence us to be the *Children of our heavenly Father*, if we love them only that love us, and do good only to them that return our *Kindness and Benefits*? Even *Publicans* can do as much as this: And the Question may be justly put to us, *What do ye more than others*? Our failing in this Duty to Men argues our great forgetfulness or inconsideration of our Obligations to the Love of God. And, yet 'tis a Duty of that Necessity and Importance, that our Lord has plainly foretold us, That we cannot expect that Compassion and Mercy from God which we refuse to extend unto Men; and that he will not forgive our *Ten-thousand Tallents*, if we forgive not our Brother his *Hundred-pence*. Let then the *Injuries and Wrongs* of others rather move our *Pitty* than our *Revenge*, that we may
re-

544 *God's Love in sending his*

resemble him whose Bowels yearned towards us, in the midst of our greatest Provocations.

6. *Let this Instance of the Love of God excite us to mutual Love.*

And this is the Inference which the Apostle himself, in the following Verse, draws from this subject; *Beloved, if God so loved us, let us also love one another*, Vers. 11. Our participation of the same peculiar Fruits of Divine Love streaming to us thro' the Mediator's Blood, shou'd greatly endear us to one another, and be a powerful *Bond of mutual Love*. The same *Relation* we bear towards the *same heavenly Father* that thus loved us, and towards the *same B. Redeemer* that thus Dy'd for us, shou'd be sufficient to cement and knit our Affections. For the like Inference another Apostle draws from the *Love of Christ*, *Walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us an Offering and Sacrifice to God of sweet smelling savour*, Eph. 5. 2. Nay the like Inferenc he elsewhere draws (among many others) from the *Grace of the same Holy Spirit*; *If there be any Consolation in Christ, If any Comfort of Love,*
If

If any Fellowship (or Communion) of the Spirit, If any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, and of one Mind, Phil. 2. 1, 2. For this marvellous Love of God to us has brought us into that near, but ennobling and endearing Relation to him, and to the whole of his Family both in Heaven and on Earth, that has laid the firmest Foundation for indissoluble mutual Love. And indeed this mutual Love is every where made the distinguishing Character of his Children, being the genuine Impression that his Love has made and left upon their Hearts. Every one that loves Him that begat, loves those that are begotten of Him, 1 John 5. 1. 'Tis when we love one another, that God dwells in us, and his Love is perfected in us, John 4. 12. And to what an height of ardent Love to our Fellow-Creatures, the Consideration of this Instance of God's Love shou'd carry us, the Apostle gives us a very surprizing Intimation, Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he laid down his Life for us; and we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren,
1 John

546 God's Love in sending his, &c.

1. John 3. 16. And sure we shou'd never grudge those the *Assistance of our Purse* or our *Parts* for whom we must if a just occasion offer, be willing to shed our Blood.

F I N I S.

THE
Just Commendation
OF
Aged Piety.
IN A
SERMON
PREACH'D

At the Funeral of Mrs. *Anne Reading*,
of *Rathfarnum*, who Departed this
Life *November* the 14th, 1704.

PROV. Chap. XVI Verse 31.

By *J. B.*

DUBLIN:
Printed by *E. Waters*, in *School-House-*
Lane, near *High-street*, 1708.

THE
COMMUNION
OF THE
SACRAMENT

Aged Piety.

IN A
SERMON

PREDICATED

At the funeral of Mrs. Anne Kemble,
of Westminster, who departed this
life December the 14th, 1704.

Prov. v. Chap. XVI Verse 31.

By F. B.

Printed by E. Smith, in School-Lane,
near St. Dunstons Church, 1704.

A
SERMON
PREACH'D

At the Funeral of Mrs.
Anne Reading, &c.

Prov. xvi. Vers. 31.

*The Hoary Head is a Crown of Glory,
if it be found in the way of Righteous-
ness.*

IF so much Esteem and Veneration
be due to an *aged Saint* while yet
Living (as my Text plainly inti-
mates) it will every way justify our paying
some Tribute of Respect to their Me-
mory, when *Dead*; especially when
their piety has been so conspicuous and

550 *The just Commendation*

shining, as to render it truly useful to those that Survive 'em, to set before 'em such bright *Patterns* as may justly excite their holy Emulation to *Equal*, or *Out-doe* them. And such a one I truly judge that late ancient Member of this Congregation to have been, whom the Providence of God has brought to her Grave in a full Age, in the beginning of the Week past, like as a shock of Corn cometh in, in his Season, Job. 5. 26.

And that I may propose such an *Example* to your *Imitation* with the greater Advantage, I have chosen to insist on these remarkable Words of *Solomon*; in which he shews us how amiable and honourable a Figure, great Age, and great Piety make, when found in a happy *Conjunction*. *The hoary Head is a Crown of Glory, if it be found in the way of Righteousness.*

We need not be solicitous to find a connection of these Words with the foregoing, these Divine Proverbs being rather a *Treasury of Pearls*, than a *Chain* whose several *Links* have any exact Dependence. 'Tis sufficient that the Text contains in it self a very just and wise *Observation*, worthy of our most serious

ous Thoughts, and capable to entertain us with useful and instructive Reflections.

There is nothing difficult in the Words themselves. No doubt by *the hoary Head*, we must understand *old Age*, of which 'tis usually the natural Symptom and Emblem. Such a *hoary Head* is a *Crown of Glory*; it renders a Person truly honourable and worthy of Esteem and Respect. But then 'tis on this Supposition, that *the hoary Head* be found in the way of *Righteousness*. That such Persons be *aged in Piety*, having glorify'd God, and serv'd their Generation thro' a long tract of Years, by a course of useful, exemplary and persevering Holiness. Then (and indeed then only) is their *hoary Head* such a resplendent *Crown of Glory*.

The Subject then which these Words offer to our Consideration, lies plainly before us, viz.

That Old Age is honourable indeed, when found in Conjunction with exemplary and persevering Piety, or in the more elegant Words of the Text, That the hoary Head is a Crown of Glory, when found in the way of Righteousness.

In speaking to this subject I shall,

I. Consider what is here *suppos'd* and *imply'd*, viz. that there is in general, a *Reverence due to Age*; that an *hoary Head* claims some respect.

II. I shall consider what is here directly asserted, that *Age is then chiefly honourable, when it is found in Conjunction with true Piety.*

I. I shall consider what is here *imply'd* and *suppos'd*, viz. That there is in general a *Reverence due to Old Age.*

An *hoary Head* is so far a *Crown of Glory*, as to entitle a Person to some *Deference and Respect* from those that are his *Inferiours* in point of *Age*. This is a dictate of natural Light it self, and founded on a reasonable Supposition, that *Age* is usually attended with greater measures of *Wisdom & Experience*. And much more do's the Scripture inculcate this Duty of the *Younger* to their *Elders*. 'Tis a general Rule which the Apostle Peter gives, *That the Younger shou'd submit themselves to the Elder*, 1 Pet. 5.5. Nay so great a respect was to be paid to *aged Persons*, that even when Faulty, they were to be treated by their *Juniors* with a becoming *Humility and Tenderness*. And therefore young *Timothy* is caution'd,
not

not to rebuke an Elder, or an antient Person, but to entreat him as a Father, 1 Tim. 5. 1, 2. Nay the Law of Moses injoyn'd, that persons whom Age had render'd venerable, shou'd have all decent Marks of Esteem and Reverence paid to 'em, Lev. 19. 32. *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old Man, and fear thy God; I am the Lord.* Where it is observable, that the giving due Respect to the Aged, is conjoyned with giving due Reverence to God himself; to intimate to us, that the Contempt of 'em may be justly reckon'd, not only an instance of Rudeness and Incivility, but even of Impiety and Irreligion. And how careful Young Persons of Old were to pay this becoming deference to the Aged, you may observe in the remarkable Example of *Elihu*, who in the Conversation that *Job* had with his *Ancient Friends*, did not presume to speak till they were all silent, and then begins with this modest Apology, *I am young and ye are very old, wherefore I was afraid and durst not shew you my opinion, I said Days shou'd speak and multitudes of Tears teach wisdom, &c.* And indeed, in most civiliz'd Nations,

554 *The just Commendation*

such a Veneration was paid to *Age*, that elder Persons were accounted fittest to be entrusted with all *Civil* and *Sacred Offices*; insomuch that *Age* gave the Denomination to their *publick Councils*, as to the *regoria* among the *Spartans*, the *Senate* of *Rome*, and more lately the *Aldermen* among the *Saxons*; and so in *Scripture*, the *Magistrates* are call'd the *Elders of the City*. And those *Christian Pastors*, who from their *Office* are called *Bishops* or *Overseers of the Flock*, are called with respect to their *Age*, *Presbyters* or *Elders* (as *Judicious Commendators* generally observe.) See *Tit. 1. 5. 7.* Compared.

To all this I might add, how frequently *old Age* is promised as a valuable *Temporal Blessing*, and particularly to those *Children* that reverence their *Aged Parents*, *Exod. 20. 12.* Nay 'tis reckon'd among the *Train* of those *Advantages* that ordinarily attend *Divine Wisdom*, or *true Religion*: *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left are Riches and Honour.* *Prov. 3. 16.*

Upon the whole, it appears, that *Age* is in it self (abstractedly considered) *honourable*. And as the wise man observes,

serves, as the glory of young Men is their Strength, so the beauty of old Men is the grey Head. Prov. 20. 29.

I proceed now,

II. To Consider what is here more directly asserted, viz. that Age is then chiefly honourable, when 'tis found in Conjunction with true Piety, and Holiness. Or that there is a peculiar Honour due to an aged Saint.

Now there are two things imply'd, that shou'd be distinctly Considered.

1. That true Piety and Holiness is the chief Ornament and Glory of our nature.

2. That it shines with a peculiar Lustre in an Aged Saint.

I. 'Tis here imply'd, that true Piety and Holiness is the chief Ornament and Glory of human nature.

'Tis this that gives a true venerableness to Age, and is the brightest Jewel in that Crown of Glory that adorns the hoary head; and without this, Age it self loses the Honour and Respect due to it; there being none more justly despicable than those that are grown old in sin.

Now that true Piety and Holiness is the chief Ornament and Glory of human nature, will appear if we consider.

I. 'Tis

556 The just Commendation

I. 'Tis this that renders us like to the Blessed God, the Fountain of all true honour.

And what indeed can more ennoble and dignifie our nature than to have his *amiable Image* enstamp't upon it? *Holiness* is the *Lustre* of all other Divine *perfections* themselves; and accordingly God is represented as *glorious in holiness*, *Exod. 15. 11.* How much more must a resemblance of him herein, be to us our chief *Crown of Glory*? there's nothing more Excellent can be said of the highest *Angels*, than that they bear a conformity herein to that Blessed God *whose face they behold*, and whose spotless holiness they incessantly Adore and Celebrate. See *Isa. 6. 23.* And we may well then reckon it the most *honourable Character* that can be given to the *Children of Men*, to be inflexibly just, exactly true, faithful and sincere, universally merciful and good to the extent of our ability and power, to be wise and pure, *as our heavenly Father is.* To be in such amiable and Godlike Qualities as these, *Imitators and Followers of him as dear Children*, is indeed to shine as *Lights in a dark World.* There is

a beauty in holiness, that commends it to the Eyes of all that are sober and considerate; nay even those often cannot forbear to reverence Persons of eminent Piety, who are far from imitating'em. Serious Religion strikes an Awe into the minds of beholders, and often extorts from the worst of Men a secret Veneration for those in whom it conspicuously shines: So that in the Judgment of all that speak impartially, *the Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour*, Prov. 12. 26. Whereas on the contrary *wickedness* is the real *shame and deformity* of human nature.

'Tis that which renders a Man truly *base and vile*; sinks him below the Beasts that Perish, by prostituting those more excellent Powers he is Endow'd with to the most dishonourable Purposes. There is an inseperable *Turpitude and Odiousness*, in *Profaneness and Irreligion, Injustice and Fraud, Lying and Falshood, Oppression and Unmercifulness, Intemperance and Uncleannefs*. These Sins like so many deep *Stains*, pollute the *Hearts and Lives* of Men, and are as *noysom* as those putry'd *Ulcers and Sores* that infect the *Body*; nay the very remains of Sin,
the

558 *The just Commendation*

the *Infirmities* and *Failures* that cleave to the best of Men, are as so many *flaws* in a *bright Jewel*, or as so many *blemishes* in an *exquisite Picture*.

2. And as true Piety and Holiness conforms us to the most Glorious of all Beings, so it *engages us in the most honourable Work*.

It makes us *fellow-Servants* with the *Angels*, who account it their highest Honour to execute the Commands of the great God, and *to do his Pleasure*, Psal. 103. 20, 21. 'Tis justly esteem'd a high preferment among Men to be a *Minister* to an *Earthly Prince*: But how much greater is it to be a *Servant* to the *Blessed and only Potentate the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*? Especially when our *Work* it self is so truly *Excellent* and *Noble*. And what can be more so than to walk and converse with God, to contemplate and adore his Perfections, to know and love and resemble him, to advance his Kingdom and Interest, to do the greatest good we are capable of to the Bodies and Souls of Men, by the faithful Discharge of all our relative Duties, to regulate our Affections and Desires, to retain and govern our

Pas.

Passions, to obtain a steady and glorious Conquest over the manifold Temptations of *this World*, and to live in the delightful Views and Hopes, and steady Pursuit of *a better*. This is the *summ* of our *Duty*; and can we live and act to *nobler purposes* than these? And how *Honourable* is this Work, in comparison with that which Satan puts his wretched Slaves upon? How are they themselves *asham'd* of their *Master*, and their *Service*? What loathsome and hateful Drudgery do their Lusts (those cruel *Task-Masters*) put them upon? To dishonour God, to debase and pollute their own Bodies and Souls? To contribute by all the disorders of a sinful Life, to make themselves and others (as far as their Example can reach) *Miserable* both *here* and *for ever*?

3. And as true Piety and Holiness engages us in the most honourable work, so it *inspires us with the most glorious Aims and Hopes*.

For hereby we are directed to the deliberate choice of the most *noble* and *valuable End* we can propose; and engag'd in the vigorous prosecution of it. And O how far do the nobler designs
and

560 *The just Commendation*

and Expectations of a *real Saint* advance him above *the Men of this World!* How do the latter sink themselves to the same level with the *Beasts that perish*, by seeking no higher than a sensual felicity, in the momentary Enjoyments of this Life! How do they *degrade an Immortal Soul*, while they turn it into a *sordid Caterer*, for this *corruptible Body*, and live to no higher purpose than to *make provision for the Lusts of the flesh to fulfil them!* How do their debased Affections *grovel on this Earth*, and *lick the Dust?* How do they with the wretched Prodigal, *feed up on husks*, and content themselves to be *Fellow-Commoners* with the Swine? Whereas on the contrary, a renewed sanctifi'd Soul understands it's own *nature and worth*, it's *vast Capacity* and *eternal Duration*; And therefore readily embraces the glorious offers of an unseen and endless happiness. It aspires to God himself, *the Father of Spirits* as it's all-sufficient *Portion and Reward*; to *Heaven* as its *native Land* and *everlasting Home*. 'Tis by Divine Grace begotten and form'd to the living hope of an *incorruptible undefil'd Inheritance that never fades away*, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Even the
Saints

Saints under the *old Testament* are describ'd, as *confessing themselves to be Pilgrims and Strangers upon Earth* (and consequently renouncing all vain Hopes of any fixed Abode or Happiness here below) and *declaring* thereby, that they *sought a better, even a Heavenly Country*, Heb. 11. 13, 14, 15. And 'tis on the account of these their glorious *Aims and Hopes* that the inspir'd Writer tells us, *God himself was not ashamed to be called their God, having prepar'd for them a City* (a durable state of Happiness, every way *commensurate* to, or rather *far beyond* their highest Expectations) v. 16. And what can ennoble a Man more than to be the *Candidate of Glory, Honour and Immortality*? What can more bespeak the true *greatness of his Mind*, than to trample with disdain on this World, and aspire with incessant Desires, and joyful Expectations, to the unconceivable Glories and Joys of the World to come? The true Christian's *Hopes*, are his *highest Honour*.

Once more,

4. True Piety and Holiness appears to be the chief ornament of our nature, as it entitles us to the most honourable Relations.

'Tis

562 *The just Commendation*

'Tis on the Account of this *Image* of his shining in us, that the Blessed God assumes the Relation of a *Father*, and owns us for his *Children*. 'Tis on the same Account that our *Saviour* owns us as the *living Members* of his *mystical Body*, nay condescends to call us his *friends* and his *Brethren*, John, 15. 14. Mark, 3. 35. Nay on this Account we are the *Temples* of God thro' the habitation of his *holy Spirit*: And 'tis as *Living Saints* here, that we are *fellow-Citizens* with those above, and related to the whole *family and household* of God, Ephes. 2. 19. And O what contemptible *Trifles*, what *gaudy Toys* are all *Titles* of *Earthly* honour, all pretences to *noble Extraction*, and descent from *Ancient* and *Renowned-Families* on Earth, in Comparison of that *Real Dignity* that accrues to us by our being thus adopted into the *Line of Heaven*? Nay how despicable are all the *Advantages* that we derive from such *secular Honours*, in comparison of the *inestimable Privileges* which as the *Sons of God* and the *Heirs of Glory* we are entitled to? Verily a *Saint in Raggs* out-shines the *greatest wicked Potentate on Earth* in all

all his glistering Pomp, in the Eyes of all that are capable Judges of true honour. The former has that inward God-like Excellency and Worth, that the latter is entirely devoid of; and the former is entitled to that bright *unfading Crown of Glory* which will for ever flourish on his head, when the others *Crown and Scepter* shall fade, and his Short-liv'd Pomp be buried in the Dust, and exchanged for *everlasting Shame and Contempt*. On all these considerations it Appears, that true Piety and Holiness is the brightest Ornament and Glory of human Nature.

But there is something here further implied, in the *Observation*, viz.

2. *That true Piety and Holiness shines with a peculiar Lustre in an Aged Saint.*

The hoary head is peculiarly venerable, and a radiant *Crown of Glory*, when found in the way of Righteousness.

But here I must premise, that by an *Aged Saint* I understand one that has entred on the ways of Holiness in his early Years, and has with sincerity persisted and persever'd in 'em thro' the whole course of a long protracted Life: One that (with pious Obadiah, 1 Kings, 18.

564 *The just Commendation*

12.) *has feared God from his Youth up,* and continued to serve him faithfully to a great Age; and of whom the same Character may be given as was once of Zechariah and Elizabeth (*when they were well stricken in Years*) that they were Righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless, Luk. 1. 6. One whose Piety has begun in his green Years, and who has kept on steadfast in the Paths thereof, 'till grey hairs have overtaken him.

Now that true Piety and Holiness shines with a peculiar Lustre in such an Aged Saint, will appear if we consider the following Particulars.

1. *Such a one has been preserved from that woful mispence of a great part of his Life in the Service of Sin, which is the Shame and Sorrow of latter Converts to God and Righteousness.*

For one that is Converted after he had for many Years, run with an ungodly World, into the same excess of Riot; and after he had Sacrific'd the Flower of his Age to his wretched Lusts; tho' his everlasting Condition be now Safe, yet it cannot but be Matter of deep Humilia-

tion

tion and Reproach to him, that he has alienated so great (even the most valuable) part of his Life from the Service of God, and with the perverse Prodigal spent it in Riotous Living. This will remain as a lasting Blot and Stain, the Remembrance whereof will be always bitter to him. With what abasement do's the Apostle Paul speak of his having been once a Blasphemer and a Persecutor, 1. Tim. 1. 15, 16, &c. With what humility do's he on the account of his late Conversation speak of himself, as one born out of due Time? 1. Cor. 15. 8.

Whereas he that has been an early Convert and yet has his hoary Head found in those ways of Righteousness into which he entred betimes, has thereby escap'd much of that heinous Guilt that others have been involved in, and in Comparison of them, the whole of his Life-time may be reckon'd as sincerely devoted to God, and spent in his Service. Such a one has truly liv'd long, whereas later Converts, may with that old Man that was converted at 60, and being ask'd five Years after how old he was, justly repli'd, five Years old; I say they may, with him, date their Life (to their shame) from their

566 *The just Commendation*

sion. And from hence we may further
infer.

2. *That such an Aged Saint may be
justly supposed to have brought forth more
abundant fruits than others to the Glory
of God, and the honour of his Christi-
an Profession.*

They that entred at the *third Hour*
have been much longer imploy'd in the
Vineyard, than others that entred at the
Sixth, or *Ninth*, or *Eleventh*; and
therefore may be reasonably suppos'd, in
proportion, to have *Labour'd more*, Mat.

20. 2, 3, 4. *An aged Saint is like an
aged Tree of long standing in the Courts
of God, that has for many Years in some
good measure, answer'd his Cost and
Care by its seasonable fruits.* Such a
one has had more numerous opportuni-
ties of doing and receiving good than
others, and may therefore be suppos'd, by
the faithful Improvement of 'em, to
have been more eminently *Useful* than
others, and to have fill'd up his Station
with more *Work and Service.* An aged
Saint has been longer than others a pain-
ful *Servant of God*, an Ornament to his
Christian Profession, and a remarkable
Bless-

Blessing in his Day and Age. And 'tis no small Honour to be such a one.

Again,

3. *An aged Saint has given more abundant Proofs of his Fidelity and Constancy than others.*

He is like a *Veteran Soldier* that has long endur'd the hardships of his Christian Warfare, whose courage and resolution has been try'd in many a sharp Conflict, who has resisted many a fierce and violent Assault, and who has hitherto adher'd with an unshaken steadfastness to the *Cause and Interest* of his Blessed Lord. He is like an *old Tree*, whom all the Storms that threaten'd to blow it down, have only made to spread its roots the deeper. Such a Christian has been expos'd to all variety of Temptations. He has (its propable) been try'd both with the *Allurements and Snares* of a prosperous Condition, and with the *Difficulties and Discouragements* of an Afflicted one; And it has appear'd by his immoveable Constancy under both, how upright his Heart has been with God, and with how inviolable Affection he has cleav'd to him. That his Love to God

568 *The just Commendation*

is too strong for the *Waters* to Quench,
or the *Floods* to Drown, Cant. 8. 7.

That he is built on a *Rock* indeed, since
the *Winds* and *Waves* that have beat so
long upon him, have not been able to
shake his fixed holy Resolutions. And
such a long *Trial* of a Christian's Faith
redounds more to his *Honour* and *Praise*,
1 Pet. 1. 7.

Once more,
4. Such an aged Saint is riper for, as
well as, in all Appearance, nearer to the
Heavenly Glory.

He is like an aged Soldier that after
a long and successful Warfare, may now
expect his time of *Triumph* and *Rest*:
Or like a Passenger, that after a long
Voyage is now within sight of his desired
Haven, where he shall be beyond the
reach of *Tempests* and *Storms*. His
Season of *Labour* and *Suffering* will
soon *Expire*, and be succeeded by a
State of everlasting *Rest* and *Reward*.
He is come near the *End* of that pain-
ful race, which he has run with a resolu-
ved *Patience*, and has the happy *Goal*,
and the incorruptible *Crown* within his
near view. He is like a *Shock* of *Corn*
grown up to full *Maturity*, and fit to be
be

be gather'd into his Master's Garner, Mach. 3. 12. He is one that has been long trained up in the School of Christ, and therefore better prepar'd for the honourable Employments of the heavenly Court and Kingdom. While such an *Aged Saint* has one foot in the grave, he has, as it were, one *Hand* stretcht out to lay hold on the heavenly Prize. He is in this sense *nearer to the Kingdom of God* than others.

On all these Accounts, *true Piety and Holiness* shines with a *peculiar Lustre* in an *Aged Saint*.

It now remains, that we make some *Practical Reflections* on the foregoing *Discourse*.

Is then the hoary head a Crown of Glory when found in the way of Righteousness.

1. We may hence reprove that *Contempt of old Age*, that is so *Common* in this *degenerate Age*.

This among *Heathens* themselves has past for a very *heinous Crime*, when those that were *Young* treated their *Superiors in Age* with *slight and Disrespect*.

570 *The just Commendation*

Credebant hoc grande nefas, & mortepiandum.

Si Juvenis vetulo non Assurrexerit
----- Juv. Sat. 13.

'Tis therefore reckon'd in Scripture, a Sign of the great Corruption of manners in a Nation, when *Children behave themselves proudly against the Ancient, and the Base against the Honourable, II. 3. 5* And 'tis reckon'd one Instance of the barbarous Usage which the *Jews* suffer'd in the Babylonish Captivity, that *the Faces of the Elders were not honour'd, Lam. 5. 12. That they respected not the Persons of the Priests nor favoured the Elders, Lam. 4. 16.* And indeed, nothing is more *Indecent*, than for the *Young* to make the *Common Infirmities* of Age, the matter of their scornful *Raillery* and Sport. This is in effect to *laugh at themselves beforehand*, and expose what may be their own future Condition. Nay since the *honouring of the Ancient*, is joyn'd with the *fearing of God*, we may (as I have already had occasion to observe) justly look on this Practice, as not only a Piece of *ill manners*, but of *Profaneness* too. And if such *disrespect* to the

the *Aged* in general be so sinful, 'tis much more so when shown by *Children to Aged Parents*. To requite *Aged Parents* for their former Care, by all tender and dutiful Affection to 'em, is recommended by the Apostle, as an *Act of Piety* highly acceptable before God, 1 Tim. 5. 4. On the contrary therefore, to neglect and despise 'em is an *Act of Irreligion and Impiety*. Like *Cham* to discover their nakedness, is to entail a Curse upon ourselves. And for the *Eye that mocks at his Father, and despiseth to Obey his Mother*, we are told, that the *Ravens of the Valley shall pluck it out, and the Young Eagle shall eat it*, Prov. 30. 17. Let us then reform this shameful Practice, let us see that *Age* have its due Respect from all, especially in the dutiful Behaviour of *Children to their Aged Parents*.

II. I wou'd hence Apply my self to those that are Young. And I wou'd urge all such, to an early entrance on the *Paths of Holiness, and Perseverance therein*, that if they shou'd live to Old Age they may have this Honour, to have their hoary Head to be a Crown of Glory to 'em.

572 *The just Commendation*

For I have shewn that this *singular Respect* is not so due to *late Converts*, as to those that *have fear'd God from their Youth*, and have kept on that holy Course to the *extremity of Age*. If then you would attain this great Honour in my Text, you must be *Religious betimes*, God must have the *Strength and Vigour* of your *Age*; and not be put off with *those Days wherein you will have no pleasure* your selves, Eccles. 12. 1. 'Tis not only infinitely hazardous to defer the service of God to *Old Age*, because you have no certain lease of Life, and so very few reach to *Old Age*, in comparison of those that fall short of it, but also because so few of those that *sin in their Youth*, do ever truly *repent in their Age*. For their vicious Habits are so rivetted and confirmed by a customary practice of sinning, that the changing of their Hearts and Lives is represented as if it were as hopeless, as for *the Ethiopian to change his Skin, and the Leopard his Spots*, Jer. 13. 23. And how little reason have such to expect any extraordinary Interposul of divine Grace for that end, who have so long resisted, and so justly forfeited all *'its ordina-*

ordinary Aids? Nay shou'd you, by a Miracle of Mercy, be converted in your Age, yet it must needs be matter of extreme *Regret* and *Shame*, that tho' often called before, you have *loyter'd till the Eleventh Hour*: That you have brought only the *Refuse* of your *Time* and *Life* to the Service of God. O then make serious Religion the busy Employment of your *Youth*, as ever you expect either the *Comfort* or *Honour* of it in *Age*. Remember that God challenges the whole of your *Time*, especially the *Strength* and *Vigour* of your *Age*. And the earlier you devote your selves to his Service, O how much *Sin* and consequently *Shame* and *Sorrow*, nay how much *Hazard* and *Contempt* and *Danger* may you prevent; which your *Delays* will certainly expose you to! Besides that you'll then have probably more *Time* for your great *Work*, and the *Opportunity* of greater *Usefulness* in your *Day* and *Generation*.

Nor must you content your selves with *entring on the way of Righteousness*, without *persevering therein*.

Your whole *Life* must be a continu'd endeavour to promote the *Glory* of *God*,
and

574 *The just Commendation*

and the present and Eternal Good of others, and to prepare for the Heavenly Glory, that when the Infirmities of Age shall come on, you may have the comfortable remembrance of having spent your Strength and Health in his faithful Service, to bear you up under them. Give then all Diligence that your *Work* and *Time* may happily *end* together. Nay as God is removing many of his *Ancient Servants*, be you preparing to *stand up in their stead*, and to supply their Place and Room, by *serving your Generation according to the will of God*, as they have already done. Consider what an indelible Reproach to Religion, and how fatal to your selves it wou'd be, to *begin in the Spirit and end in the Flesh*? to pretend to serve God in your Youth, and to draw back from him in your riper Age, as if you resolved to make good that hellish Proverb, of a *Young Saint and an Old Devil*. But,

III. I wou'd hence *Apply my self to those that are Aged*; and here I wou'd distinctly speak.

I. To such as are Old in Sin and Wickedness.

2. To such whose hoary Heads are found in the way of Righteousness.

1. I wou'd speak something briefly
to such as are Old indeed, but old in
Wickedness and Sin.

And if it be such an Honour to be an
aged Saint, 'tis on the contrary no less
a Reproach to be an old Sinner.

And alas, how many such are to be
found among us! There were indeed some
Reverence due to their hoary Heads, if
they did not stain that Crown of Glory,
by their obstinate continuance in a wick-
ed course. But O what a confounding
shame is it, to have liv'd so long to no
valuable, nay to the most wretched and
vile Purpose! Nay what a shame to con-
tinue in your natural Ignorance and
Darkness, after the Gospel has for for-
ty, fifty, sixty Years, perhaps, shone
brightly round about you! How great
a reproach to be still devoyd of spiritual
Life, when the long date of your natural
Life is almost Expir'd! To be still dead
in Trespasses and Sins, when temporal
Death is just ready to seize you, and
consign you over to Everlasting Death:
How woful is your Case that have so
wretchedly alienated the whole of your
past Life from God, that if you shou'd

576 *The just Commendation*

return now, you have nothing but the *dregs of Age* to offer to him, and can only come with your *lame Crutches* as *Volaries* to his Service: Shou'd it not fill you with Confusion and Horror, that your Time is just Ended, and the *shadows* of an Everlasting Night of Dark-ness, are *stretch'd out* upon you; and yet you have not so much as *intred* on the greatest Work you have to do for Eternity: That you have all your Days forgot the main End and Business of Life, having spent it in anxious Cares to please and pamper this Flesh, while the Concerns of your precious Souls, and everlasting State have been wofully *Neglected* and *Post-pon'd*: O tremble to think that you have liv'd so long, only to grow more hardned in Sin, to fill up the *measure* of your Iniquities, and by your abuse of greater forbearance and long-suffering, to *treasure up more Wrath* against the Day of Wrath, and the re-velation of the righteous Judgment of God: Rom. 2. 4, 5. O blush at your amazing Folly, and tremble at your unspeakable Danger. Remember and consider that awful Passage, that a *Sinner of an hundred years Old* shall be

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Accursed. *Is.* 65. 20. O let not that *Age* which is in it felt a valuable *Blessing*, prove only a *Curse* to you by heightning your *Guilt*, and increasing your *Everlasting Shame* and *Punishment*. To be an *old Swearer*, an *old Drunkard*, or *Miser*, &c. is a dreadful *Character* indeed. O tremble then for fear, lest your *hoary Heads* shou'd come to the *Grave* with such a load of *unrepented*, and consequently *unpardoned* *Guilt*. To your *secure Souls*, that stand so near the brink of *Eternal Ruin*, I may well speak in the *Language* of the *Ship-Master* to sleepy *Jonah*, *What mean ye, O ye Sleepers, Arise and call upon your God, if so be he may think upon you and you perish not for ever*, *Jon.* 1. 6. Your *Repentance* had need to be both *Speedy* and *Deep*, when your *Guilt* has been so great and of so long *Continuance*.

2. I wou'd apply my self to those of you whose *hoary Head* is found in the way of *Righteousness*.

And that partly as a *Monitor*, and partly as a *Comforter*.

1. I wou'd as your *Monitor* exhort you to *Abound* and *Persevere* in the way of *Righteousness* to the *End*.

To

578 *The just Commendation*

To you I wou'd speak in the Language of the Apostle Paul, *Be not weary of well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not, Gal. 6. 9.* You have been long planted in the Courts of God, O see that you grow up there as *tall Cedars in his Lebanon*; see that you be there *fat and flourishing*, and such as *bring forth Fruit in their Old Age*, Pf. 92. 12, 13, 14. O let it be your *Character* as it was pious *Anna's*, when a *Widow of Eighty four Years*, that you *Depart not from the Temple*, but *serve God Day and Night, with Fasting and Tears*, Luk. 2. 36. Let it be your *Honour* as it was *Thyatira's*, that your *last Works are better than your First*, Rev. 2. 19. There is such a thing as a *latter Spring*, O may your *Fruits* therein be more *Kindly and Mellow*. 'Tis true, we cannot expect from you that *warmth* and *fervour* of devout Affection, that is peculiar to the *heat of Youth*; but we may expect more *soundness of Judgment*, more *steadfastness of holy Resolutions*, and greater *mortification to this World*, and to all those contemptible *Vanities* of it, upon which you are so ready to close your Eyes, and above all more of a *heavenly*

venly Spirit and Conversation. We may expect that you shou'd be more rooted in Faith and grounded in Love; that your Evidences for Heaven shou'd be more clear, and your Desires after it more strong; that you that stand nearer to, shou'd feel more of the Powers of the world to come. We may expect that you shou'd be more in the realizing Forethoughts and Views of that blessed Eternity, which you stand on the borders of. And such genuine excellent Fruits as these will be indeed a bright Crown of Glory to your hoary Heads, they will be the best Ornament of your Age.

2. I wou'd partly speak to you as a Comforter.

You have manifold Infirmities to struggle with and groan under, but you have suitable Encouragements for your Support. Your long fidelity in the Service of God is graciously accepted by him; whatever Men may do, God never cast off his aged Servants. You may offer in Faith, that excellent Prayer of the Psalmist, O God thou hast taught me from my Youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works. Now also



580 The just Commendation

when I am Old, and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy Strength unto this Generation, and thy Power to every one that is to come, Ps. 71. 17, 18. And you may expect such a gracious Answer, as those Words of his to Israel, You were born by me from the Belly, and carried from the Womb, even unto Old Age, I am he, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you, Il. 46. 3, 4. 'Tis true indeed you have manifold Failures and Omissions to repent of, but you have the Testimony of Conscience to be the solid ground of your Rejoycing, viz. That in simplicity and godly sincerity you have had your Conversation in the World, not in fleshy Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, 2 Cor. 1. 12. What tho' the Almond-Tree flourish, your hoary Head being thus found in the way of Righteousness, is a Crown of Glory? What tho' wrinkles deform your natural Village, your Vertues shine the brighter thro' 'em? What tho' your outward Man sensibly declines, when your inward Man is renew'd by the vigorous Exercises of Divine Hope and Faith? What tho' pains and languishings (those Harbingers of Death) are coming on, you may

may say as the Psalmist, *My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the strength of my Heart, and portion for ever, Ps. 73. 26.* Be encourag'd then to hold out in the way of *Righteousness to the End*; a few *Conflicts* more, especially with your *last Enemy*, and you come off *Conquerors* for ever. A few *steps* more and you come to the *End* of your *Race*, and gain the inestimable *Prize* for which you *Run*. Your *Labours* are almost *Ended*, and you are just ready to enter on your *everlasting Rest*. You are, as it were, within sight of that heavenly *Shore*, where all your *Dangers* are over. You have need of *Patience*, that after you have done the *Will of God*, you may inherit the *Promises*. And yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry, Heb. 10. 36, 37. And that I may enforce what I have suggested, both as your *Monitor* and *Comforter*, I shall briefly remind you of the Example of one lately deceased, whose hoary Head was found in the way of *Righteousness*.

And I may truly say of her, as the inspired Historian do's of *Mnason of Cyprus*, that she was an *Old Disciple*, Acts

582 *The just Commendation*

21. 16. I have good reason to believe she *entred early on the way of Righteousness*, and *feared the Lord from her Youth*. And for the time of my Personal Knowledge, for now above *twenty Years* past, she has walked in them, with that *Integrity* and *Stedfastness*, that rendered her a bright *Ornament* to her Christian Profession, which she preserved without any observable *Blemish* or *Stain*. How accurate and regular She was in all relative Duties, her sorrowful *Relations* abundantly testify. And I am particularly told by those, that had the Opportunity of observing her, that She rarely failed of *retiring*, for the Exercises of Devotion *four times a Day*.

Two Christian Vertues I always tho't very remarkable in her, the *One* was great *Humility*, which the Apostle recommends as the *Clothing* or *Ornament* of a true Christian, 1 Pet. 5. 5. The other a *Charitable tenderness* for the *Reputation* of others; there being very few I know or have known, more entirely free from the too common Guilt of *evil speaking*. (I mean the *speaking evil* of others, either *unjustly* or *without any cogent reason or necessity*.) I might add, that her
Chri.

Christian Love was Catholick, extending to all in whom the Image of Christ appeared, without being any way confin'd to a *Party*. And how constant she was in her secret Converses with God, appears from many *Papers* of her own writing, found since her Death, containing *Meditations* and *Prayers* on the most remarkable *Events* of Providence relating to her self and her Family. And her comfortable and peaceful *End* was suitable to such an upright *Course*: She gave such pertinent particular *Advices* to all her *Relations* about her, and pour'd out such ardent *Prayers* for 'em, as greatly affected 'em. And may they leave deep and lasting Impressions on all of 'em! She particularly charg'd 'em to love God, and to live so, that they might not be ashamed to meet her at the great Day of Accounts. When they wept about her, she check'd their Grief with the words of our Lord, weep not for me, but weep for your selves: for I go to my God and your God. She often repeated with great pleasure and fervency those remarkable words of Job, For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that at the latter day, he shall stand upon the Earth.

584 The just Commendation

And tho' after my Skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for my self, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another: tho' my reins be consumed within me, Job 19. 25, 26, 27. She often recited that Passage of Malachy, chap. 3. 16, 17. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkned and heard it, and a Book of remembrance was Written before him, for them that fear'd the Lord, and thought upon his Name. And they shall be mine saith the Lord of Hosts, in that Day when I make up my Jewels. So had she that memorable passage often in her Mouth, Blessed are the Dead that dye in the Lord, for they rest from their Labours, and their Works follow them, Rev. 14. 13. Yet she spake with great Humility and Abasement of her self, renouncing all pretensions of her own Merits, and founding her hopes on the Mercy of God, thro' the merits of Christ. While capable of speaking, she often express'd her longing Desires to be dissolv'd; and when unable to speak, had her Hands and her Eyes lifted up, and in that posture breathed out her Soul into the Hands

Hands of her heavenly Father. Thus did she *live and dye in the Lord.*

And may such *Examples* excite all of us to be *followers of them, that thus thro' Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.* Such *aged Saints* have long tried the Ways of God and Righteousness, and when they thus recommend 'em to us, both *Living and Dead*, it shou'd strengthen our Faith, and confirm our Holy Resolutions. We see the *Power*, the *Beauty*, the *Excellency* of the Christian Religion, conspicuously appearing in their *holy Life*, and *triumphant Death*. And may every such Example quicken our Progress, and encourage our Perseverance, in the same paths of Holiness: Especially the dying *Admonitions and Charges* of such *aged Saints* shou'd be of great *Authority and Weight*, with all their *surviving Relations*, and shou'd never be forgotten by 'em. And truly 'tis no small allay to the loss of 'em, when we see, in their Death, the observation of the Psalmist so fully verify'd, *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright, for the end of that Man is Peace*, Ps. 37. 37. 'Tis a comfortable Sight, to see an *aged Saint* going off the

586 The just Commendation

Stage with joyful Hopes, to see their Sun
 sett in a bright Cloud, to see 'em pass
 thro' the Valley of the shadow of Death
 without Fear, and enter in the Triumphs
 of Divine Faith, into the everlasting
 Kingdom of their God and Saviour.
 Such we shou'd regard, as happily gone
 before, and accordingly prepare to fol-
 low 'em. And may we all of us so ear-
 ly engage in the Service of God, and
 so stedfastly persist in it, that if Death
 overtake us sooner, it may never come
 upon us by an unwelcome Surprise, but
 find us with our Loins girt, and Lamps
 burning, in a prepared posture for the
 coming of our Lord. If it be defer'd
 to Age, may our hoary head be a Crown
 of Glory, being found in the way of
 Righteousness: And may we, as a ripe
 shock of Corn, come in our full Season in-
 to the granary of Heaven.

3 NO 33

FINIS

EARLY

PIETY

Recommended,

From 1 Chron. XXVIII. Vers. 9.

A

SERMON

PREACH'D

To an Auditory of
Young Persons.

By J. B.

DUBLIN:
Printed by E. Waters, in School-House-
Lane, near High-street, 1708.

P I E T Y

Recommended

From the Canon XXVIII. Vol. 9

SELECTION



To an Auditor of
Young Persons.

By J. B.

Printed by W. W. in School House -
Lane, near High Street, 1708.

A
SERMON
PREACH'D, &c.

1 Chron. xxviii. Vers. 9.

And thou Solomon, my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: for the Lord searches all Hearts, and understands all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek Him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.—

THE Counsels of Wise and Holy Parents, whose Judgments are matur'd by Age and Experience, shou'd be Receiv'd by their Children with a profound Veneration: But above all others, their dying Advice and Charge

Charge, as it usually carries extraordinary weight with it; so it especially claims their attentive Regard, and shou'd leave the most deep and lasting Impression on 'em. It were a great failure in point of filial Affection and Duty to forget and flight it.

Such a solemn *Charge* of a *dying Father* to his *Son*, you have here, even that of *Holy David*, upon the prospect of his Descease to his *Son Solomon*, who was to be his *Successor* in the Throne. He had in the Verse before, laid the like *Charge* on the Great *Assembly*, compos'd of the *Princes* and *Heads* of the *Tribes* of *Israel*, in the sight of all *Israel*, and in the *Audience* of *God*. That they shou'd keep and seek for all his *Commands*. And because the *Authority* and *Example* of *Solomon* (into whose Hands the People were, according to *God's* Direction, about to put the *Royal Scepter*) might greatly contribute hereto, *David* do's with the *Authority* and *Affection* of a prudent and godly *Father* Address himself to his *Son Solomon* in these moving and awful Words; *And thou Solomon*, &c.

In which we may distinctly consider,

In

I. The *Relation* he claims to him ;
And thou Solomon, my Son.

II. The solemn *Advice* and *Charge*
 he delivers him, *Know thou the God of
 thy Father, and serve him with a perfect
 Heart and willing Mind.*

III. The *Arguments* he uses to en-
 force it : Of which there are several
 very cogent Ones.

I. We have here the *Relation* he claims
 to him ; *And thou Solomon my Son:*

So that from this *Relation*, he bespeaks
 his affectionate and dutiful *Regard* to
 the following important *Advice*, *q. d.* as
 thou either payest a just *Respect* and *De-*
fence to my *Authority*, as a *Father*, or
 woudst testify that grateful *Affection* to
 me, which my tender *Care* and *Love*
 have so deeply bound thee to, see that
 thou fulfil this my last *Charge*.

Whence we may observe,

That *Religious Parents* shou'd *Employ*
all the Authority they have over their
Children, and *all the Interest* they have
 in their *Affections*, in order to the *En-*
gaging 'em effectually to the *Service* of *God*.

They can never use their *Parental Au-*
thority to a more excellent *End*, than to
 advance the *Authority* of *God* in the
 Hearts

Hearts of their Children, and to subject 'em to his Government : And they can never improve the *Love* their Children bear 'em to better purpose, than by making Advantage of it, to enforce their pious Counsels, and by requiring their Love of God and his Holy Ways as the greatest proof of their dutiful Affection to themselves. And indeed they wretchedly fail in their Zeal for the Glory of God, and in their Duty towards their Children; nay, they Violate their solemn *Promises* concerning 'em, if they use not these excellent Advantages, for recommending serious Religion to 'em. And, O that *Christian Parents* wou'd more carefully imitate the holy *Example* here set before 'em !

But because I design this Discourse, chiefly for the benefit of *young Persons*, I shall proceed to consider the *Advice* here given and the *arguments* us'd to enforce it: And because the *Subject* is copious and entirely *practical*, I shall with all the brevity I can Explain and Apply *Both*.

We may then here observe;

'Tis the Duty of all young persons, especially those that are descended from Religious Parents, to know the Lord God of their

their Father, and serve Him with a perfect Heart : And they are under manifold, peculiar Obligations thereto.

In speaking to this Observation, I shall, according to the method propos'd,

1. *Explain and Urge this Advice given by David to Solomon, on all the Children of Religious Parents.*

2. I shall endeavour to enforce it by a particular consideration of those Motives that are here suggested in my Text.

1. I shall explain and urgethis advice of *David* to his Son *Solomon*, upon all the *Children of Religious Parents*.

Now in the *Advice* there are two *Branches*.

First, *Know thou the Lord God of thy Father.*

Now our *Knowledge* of *God* may signify either barely an *Act* of our *Understanding*, or also an *Act* of our *Choice* and *Affection*. Both are, doubtless, here included.

1. This *Knowledge* of *God* may be considered, as an *Act* of our *Understanding* and *Judgment*.

And so we may be said to *know God*, when we are convinc'd of his Being ; when we understand, in some measure, what

what he has reveal'd in his *Works*, but especially in his *Word*, concerning his *Nature* and the glorious *Perfections* thereof; concerning his *Laws*, as the *Rule* of our *Duty*, and especially, concerning his gracious *Counsels* and merciful *Covenant*, the great *Foundation* of our *Hope* and *Expectations*, and the *Rule* of his final *Judgement*.

And no doubt, that *Holy David* does require *Solomon* in this Sense to *Know the God of his Father*. For he was not only oblig'd thereto as one of the *People of Israel*, to whom the *Divine Oracles* were *Committed*, but peculiarly as a *King*. For their *Princes* were oblig'd to write a copy of the *Law* in a *Book* with their own *Hand*, that they might read therein all the *Days* of their *Life*. Deut. 17. 18, 19. (And O that *Christian Princes* were more diligent *Students* in the *Divine Law*; How soon wou'd they then become the happy *Instruments* to restore corrupted and declining *Religion* to its purity and *Power*!

Some competent *Knowledge of God* is indeed, a necessary *step* to his true *Service*. *Ignorance* is no *Mother* of true *Devotion*. And in this sense the unknown
God

God, is no fit *Inscription* on the *Altar* of his *sincere Worshippers*. We can pay no acceptable *Homage* to that infinite Spirit, without some suitable *Apprehensions* concerning him; We must understand his *Laws* that we may *Obey* 'em: And we can never manage aright any serious *Transactions* with him, about our everlasting Concerns, until we be acquainted with the tenour of his gracious *Covenant*.

And now let me urge this *Advice* on you that are the *Children of Religious Parents*. Know ye the Lord God of your Parents. You have a much more clear and perfect Revelation of his Will, brought by Jesus Christ the Lord from Heaven, Heb. 1. 1, 2. You have abundant helps to inform and clear your Judgments: O apply your Minds to understand what God has condescended to make known concerning his *Nature*, his *Laws*, and his *Covenant*.

To that end, be not Strangers to those *Holy Scriptures*, which contain that excellent *Revelation*. Let it therefore be your first care by the perusal of these holy Oracles, to become *Wise to Salvation*, 2 Tim. 3. 15. Not only commit to your *Memories*, but endeavour by frequent

quent meditation to *digest* in your *Minds* those Great and Momentous Truths, which *Catechisms* contain. Despise not those truly enriching and valuable *Treasures* of Heavenly Wisdom. Spare no pains to attain the practical Knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, whom to know is Life Eternal, John 17. 3. To understand the Sinfulness and Misery of your fallen State, the Methods of the Grace of God in your Restoration to his Image and Favour by Jesus Christ as your reconciling Mediator and Head, the Promises and the Duties of the New Covenant, is absolutely Necessary to all serious Treaties with him about your recovery and Salvation. To know God, then must be your first step in serious Religion; And to do it aright will require a diligent attendance to the means of Instruction you are furnish'd with.

But,

2. This Knowledge of God may be consider'd as an Act of Choice and Affection. And so to Know the Lord is the same thing, as to choose and own him to be our God.

'Tis

'Tis no unusual thing in the Hebrew Language for words that directly signify *Understanding* to connote *Affection*. Nor is this sense of the Word unusual in Scripture. You may observe it, Pf. 1. ult. Mat. 7. 23. and many other Places.

And no doubt *Holy David* here intended that *Solomon* shou'd not only *understand the Lord God of his Father*, but *acknowledge* him as such, and (in the Language of the Covenant between God and that People) solemnly *avouch him for his God*, Deut. 26. 17, 18. He charges him here therefore to *avow* God's *Propriety* in him, and *Sovereignty* over him, both as he was the *true God*, who has an unquestionable *Dominion* and *Authority* over all his *reasonable Creatures*, and as he was the *God of his Father* to whom he had been by *Circumcision* devoted, nay to *choose* him as his *God* and his *Portion* forever. For without this, the bare *Knowledge* of God wou'd but aggravate his *Guilt* and heighten his *Condemnation*, Rom. 1. 21. Tit. 1. 16.

Let me therefore urge this *Advice* also on you that are the *Children of Religious Parents*, *own the Lord God of your Parents*

rents. Let him become your God by your freest Choice, and most deliberate Consent. Avouch your selves to be his People, his voluntary Subjects and Servants. Let the *Baptismal Vow* become your own personal Act and Deed; content not your selves with having the filth of the Flesh put away by that external Institution without the Answer of a good Conscience towards God. i. e. A sincere Res stipulation and promise of Faith in him, and holy Obedience to him, 1 Pet. 3. 21. Approve hereby the devout Zeal of your pious Parents in consecrating you to God, and bringing you under the Bonds of his Covenant; ratify it now by your own deliberate Consent.

And because the nature of this Covenant by the renewal whereof, I am Exhorting you to Avouch the Lord God of your Father, as your God, will best appear in some brief and comprehensive Draught or Form of it, I shall suggest such a one for your Instruction and Direction in so important a Duty.

Set apart then some time for serious Meditation, and having duly weigh'd what that Covenant promises on God's part and requires on yours, address your selves

selfes to him in some such Language as this.

“ Most great and glorious Majesty !
“ Look down with a compassionate Eye
“ on a guilty Sinner, that humbly pro-
“ strates himself before thy Mercy-seat.
“ I am indeed altogether unworthy of
“ thy Notice and Regard. The pol-
“ lution of my depraved Nature, and
“ the manifold Offences of my past
“ Life, might justly expose me to thy
“ righteous Displeasure and Curse for
“ ever. But since thou hast in infinite
“ Mercy declared thy self willing to be
“ reconciled to all that thro’ Jesus Christ
“ return to Thee, Lo! I come with the
“ Shame and Sorrow of a relenting *Pro-*
“ *digal* to cast my self on the Bowels
“ of thy *Fatherly* Pitty.

“ I am, O Lord, already *thine* by
“ manifold *Obligations*, as *made* by
“ thy *Power*, *preserved* by thy *Care*,
“ *maintained* by thy rich *Goodness*, and
“ *redeemed* by that *invaluable Price* the
“ *Blood of thy Son*. I am *thine* also by
“ the solemn *Dedication* of *Religious Pa-*
“ *rents* who have brought me under the
“ Bonds of thy Covenant. And those
“ *Bonds* I now desire *personally* to enter
“ into.

" into. That Holy Covenant I come
 " now to renew by my voluntary Con-
 " sent and solemn Promise. For I wou'd
 " be thine by free and deliberate Choice,
 " as I am thine by indispensable Duty.
 " I do with all Humility and thank-
 " fulness believe and embrace thy pre-
 " cious Promises, particularly those of
 " Pardon and Adoption, of sanctifying
 " Grace and of the heavenly Inheritance,
 " which thou hast made to all believing
 " and penitent Souls thro' Jesus Christ.
 " That Blessed Redeemer I sincerely
 " receive as my reconciling Mediator;
 " To him I give up myself as my Tea-
 " cher, Lord and Saviour, resolving to
 " become his Disciple, his Client and
 " Subject. Him I own for my Head;
 " To him I commit my lost and perishing
 " Soul, even to his care and conduct as
 " the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls;
 " Thro' his precious Attoning Blood
 " and powerful Intercession, I hope for
 " Pardon and Acceptance to Eternal Life;
 " and by him I now come to Thee.
 " Thou Lord art my absolute Own-
 " er and Disposer. I have too long liv-
 " ed to myself, but now I resolve to live
 " to thee. I here offer up my Body and
 " Soul,

“ Soul, as a living *Sacrifice* to thee, un-
“ feignedly purposing to employ the
“ *Members* of the one and the *Faculties*
“ of the other as *Instruments of Righte-*
“ *ousness unto Holiness.* My *Time* and
“ *Strength* and all that I *am* and *have*
“ shall be used according to thy *Will*
“ and for thy *Glory* and *Interest.* I al-
“ so yield my self freely to thy wise and
“ gracious *Disposal*, and desire to acqui-
“ esce in all the determinations of thy
“ sovereign holy *Providence.* Let the
“ *Lord* do with me what seems good in
“ his *Eyes.*

“ Thou art my *rightful* and *sovereign*
“ *Ruler*, tho’ to my shame and grief
“ I have too long *Neglected* and *fligh-*
“ *ted* thy just *Commands*: But I now
“ *unfeignedly own* and *Subject* my self
“ to thy *Authority.* I approve thy
“ *Laws*, as *Holy, Just* and *Good.* I re-
“ solve to study ’em, to meditate on ’em,
“ to propose ’em to my self as my *Rule*
“ and *Guide*, and to endeavour after a
“ sincere *Conformity* to all of ’em,
“ without any *Exception* or *Reserve.*
“ Do thou *incline my Heart* to thy *Testi-*
“ *monies*, do thou *Write all thy Laws*
“ *there*, and let thy sanctifying *Grace*
enable

enable me to perform in my Life,
 what I have sworn with my Tongue
 and Heart, *That I will keep thy righte-*
ous Judgments. And () let thy
 Mercy blot out all my Transgressions,
 and overlook all my Failures, which
 yet I sincerely resolve to strive against.
 Thou Lord art my entire Bene-
 factor, and my ultimate End. I have
 too long forsaken thee, the only Foun-
 tain of my true Happiness, and
 sought it in the broken Cisterns of earth-
 ly Comforts. But now my Soul re-
 turns to Thee as the only Centre of
 its everlasting Satisfaction and Rest.
 I thankfully acknowledge all the mer-
 cies I enjoy, as the gifts of thy un-
 deserved Bounty: But let not the
 Blessings of this Life be my Portion.
 For I renounce this World, and all
 its Riches, Honours, and Pleasures,
 so far as they stand in competition with
 thy Favour, and thy Heavenly King-
 dom. Give me an Interest in the pe-
 culiar Mercies of thy Sure and Ever-
 lasting Covenant. Make me an Heir
 of thy incorruptible Inheritance, and
 this shall be all my Desire, and all
 my Salvation. Thou art my chosen
 Fe-

To *Felicity and Portion*; O let the *Glorifying and Pleasing* thee, be my highest End and Aim!

“ And in order to the sincere performance of these my *Vows*, I give up my self entirely to the Guidance of thy *Holy Spirit*. I am grieved that I have so oft grieved him, by *resisting* and *quenching* his holy *Motions*. But I now resign my *Soul and Body* to become his *Living Temple*, and resolve to follow his *Dictates and Counsels*. O let that *Blessed Spirit* take entire Possession of me! Let him *Seal me to the Day of Redemption*, and become the *Earnest of my Eternal Inheritance*! Let him *Enlighten*, and *Purify*, *Comfort* and *Quicken* my *Soul*, and *prepare* it for that State of perfect *Light and Life*, *Love* and *Joy* that I am an *Expectant* of. ”

“ And as I thus devote my self to Thee, so I heartily renounce all thy *Enemies*. I disclaim the unjust *Usurpation* of *Satan*, and will be no longer his voluntary *Captive*. I resolve, by thy *Grace*, to resist his *Temptations*, and to oppose his *Kingdom of Darkness and Wickedness*, in this
“ World

" World. I renounce the Dominion of
 " Sin, and resolve to maintain a perpetu-
 " al Warfare against it. I renounce this
 " World as 'tis become the Fuel of im-
 " pure Lusts, and neither its Allure-
 " ments nor Frowns shall seduce me from
 " my persevering Obedience to Thee.

" These solemn Promises I make to
 " thee, O Blessed Majesty, not from
 " any confidence I have in my own
 " Strength, but wholly relying on thy
 " efficacious Grace, to begin and per-
 " feet every good Work in me. And
 " now receive me, O gracious God,
 " according to the tenour of thy mer-
 " ciful Covenant, into the number of
 " thy peculiar People. I am thy devo-
 " ted Subject and Servant; O let me
 " be thy reconcil'd, thy justify'd, thy
 " adopted Child, a living Member in
 " the mystical Body of my B. Saviour,
 " and an Heir of thy precious Promises!
 " Accept then this Heart and Life
 " which I dedicate to Thee; and let
 " this Covenant I make on Earth, be
 " ratify'd in Heaven, and be a perpetu-
 " al Covenant, that shall never be for-
 " gotten! Amen and Amen!

By

By such a *Covenant* as this, shou'd the *Children of Religious Parents*, in their early Days, own and avouch the *Lord God* of their *Fathers*, to be their *God*; for whose further *Direction* in this great *Work*, I wou'd subjoin the following *Advices*.

1. Let it be done with the deepest *Deliberation*.

It becomes us not to be *rash* and *unadvised* in so awful *Transactions*, with so great and glorious a *Majesty*. We shou'd duly ponder the *Engagements* we enter into; We shou'd consider the *Strictness* and *Extent* of those holy *Laws* to which we vow our *Obedience*; we shou'd count the cost of our *Holy Religion*, Luke 14. 28, &c. Set all the *Disadvantages* and *Hardships* that may attend the *Profession* and *Practice* of it, in our *View*.

Nor shou'd we overlook those *encouraging Motives* that justify our choice, and represent it as truly the *wisest* and the *best*. We shou'd be convinc'd, that in thus devoting our selves to *God*, our *Duty* and our *Everlasting Interest* are inseparably conjoyn'd.

2. It must be done with the greatest *Seriousness* and *Sincerity*. For

For sure we cannot set so awful and tremendous a Majesty before our Eyes, and when we have done, only *trifle* with him, in so solemn Transactions as these. We shou'd call up all our Powers, and summon our Souls to the most serious attention to what we are about, as knowing these are Matters of infinite *Moment* and *Consequence*. And O with what *Integrity* of heart, shou'd we enter into the Bonds of that Holy Covenant, as sensible that we are under the jealous Observant Eye of that God, who *searches our Hearts, and knows all the Imaginations of our Thoughts!* How solicitous shou'd we be to approve our selves to his Judgment, to whom all the secret Purposes of our Minds are *open and naked!*

3. It must be done with great *Humility* and *self-distrust*.

The sense of our great *Unworthiness* and *Vileness* shou'd fill us with the deepest Shame and self-abasement; and the Experience we have had of the *Deceitfulness of our own Hearts*, shou'd make us *diffident* of our own *unstable Purposes*. We shou'd therefore engage our selves to God in a humble Dependance

on his Grace for *Strength* to perform our *Vows*, and Pray as 1 Chron. 29. 18. v. *Keep this O Lord upon the Imagination of the Thoughts of my Heart for ever, and prepare my Heart unto thee.*

4. It must be done with great *Freedom* and *Cheerfulness*.

We must esteem it as the Effect of Gods sovereign Grace, that we are inclined to become *his willing People in the Day of his Power*, Ps. 110. 3. And with what *Alacrity* shou'd we bind our selves to God, when we consider, that we are never more *happily our own* than when we are most *entirely his*. We shou'd account it an admirable *Favour*, that the Great God will admit us into such a Blessed *League* of Amity and Peace with him. We shou'd therefore joyfully embrace the *Offers*, and *consent* to the *Terms* thereof, as persuaded, that an Interest in his Covenant is more valuable than if the whole World were our Possession.

But I proceed to the Second Branch of the *Advice and Charge*; *Serve him with a perfect Heart, and a willing Mind.*

No

No doubt the *Service* of God do's here include all the *Duties* of Practical Religion and Holiness : All the *Duties* we owe to him; as our *Owner* and *Benefactor*, as well as our *Supreme Ruler*. For indeed, his holy Laws enjoyn all of 'em, so that his *Service* may fitly comprehend 'em *all*. 'Tis this Universal sincere *Obedience* to him, which our practical *Knowledge* of him tends to prepare us for; and by paying it, we perform that *Holy Covenant* wherein we so solemnly *choose* and *own* and *avouch* him to be our God.

O let us then *resolve* and *begin* to *serve* him. Endeavour to *understand* your *Duty* in it's *Extent* and *Latitude*. Study the Laws of God. Read some judicious *Expositions* on the *Ten Commandments*, (that comprehensive *Summary* of your *Duty*) and often compare your *Hearts* and *Lives* therewith. Propose the word of God as the *Lamp* to your *Feet* and the *Light* to your *Paths*, Ps. 119 105. Enter on a course of holy *Obedience*. Set apart *state* times for *Reading*, *Closet Prayer*, *Meditation*, &c. Consider your several *Relations*, and the several *Duties* they oblige you to. Observe the *Opportunities*

tunities of doing or receiving Good put into your Hands, to improve 'em, and the *Temptations* you are in danger of, to avoid or resist 'em. Learn the value of *Time*, and begin to redeem it, with holy Care, for the best purposes. Set up the glory of God as your Aim, and begin to live as *his*, and not your own.

And here are two particulars suggested concerning our *service of God*, that may direct us as to the manner of performing it.

I. *We must serve him with a perfect Heart.*

The Words must doubtless be understood of a *Perfection* (not of *Degrees*, but) of *Parts*. Tho' we cannot reach to *sinless*, we must not fall short of *sincere Obedience*. Not only must our *Bodies*, but our *Hearts*, our *Souls* and their *superior Powers* be engag'd and employ'd in doing his Will. And our *Hearts* must be so *Entire* or *Perfect* therein, as to make no sinful *Exceptions* and *Reserves* from any part of his Service. No *secret Sin* must be *Indulg'd*, and no *known Duty* wilfully *Neglected*. We must baulk no *Commands*, because they enjoyn what is repugnant

pugnant to our sensual Inclinations, or contrary to our worldly Interests, and because our obedience to 'em is attended with hardship and self-denial. No sin must be wilfully cherish'd, whatever advantages of *pleasure* or *profit* it may bring. Our hearts must not be *divided* between God and Satan; Nor must we think to serve two so contrary *Masters* as *him* and *Mammon*, Matth. 6. 24. What *David* professes of himself, must be our *Practice*, *I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God, for all his Judgments were before me, and I did not put away any of his Statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept my self from my Iniquity*, Ps. 18. 21, 22, 23.

2. We must also serve him with a willing Mind.

His Service must be our *freest choice*, and we must esteem it our most delightful *Employment*. We must not be dragged to it meerly as *Slaves* by the dread of the *Whip*, but drawn to it from *ingenuous Motives*.

To that end, Let us often ponder the *Excellency* of God's Service. Let us not entertain injurious apprehensions of it as if it were a disconsolate *Slavery*. For 'tis
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indeed our *truest* and our *noblest freedom*
Pf. 119. 45. Let's look on the *Ways of*
God, not under those frightful Colours
that Satan wou'd Paint serious Religion
in, but as the Scriptures represent 'em, and
as they are in themselves *Ways of plea-*
santness and Paths of Peace, Prov. 3. 17.
Be convinc'd that the Laws of God are
good as well as *holy and just*, Rom. 7. 12.
Even truly calculated for thy highest In-
terest ; so that the more fully thy heart is
conformed to 'em, the more deeply is the
Foundation of thy Happiness inlayd, in
thy own Temper and Frame. Esteem it
thy highest Honour to be his Servant, and
account it more ennobling to *wear his*
Livery, than to *sway* the most glorious
Earthly Scepter. Behold how sweet and
delightful Work God's *Precepts* enjoin,
such as sows the Seeds of inward Sere-
nity and Joy in our own Consciences.
Great peace have they that love thy Law,
Pf. 119. 165.

Often consider thy *endearing Obligations*
to the service of God.

Think frequently of those *Cords of*
Love wherewith he has *bound* thee to it.
Account thy *Service* to him but a just
and grateful *Return* for his wonderful

Mercy, in releasing thee from the ignominious and destructive Tyranny of Satan and Servitude of Sin. Say with the devout Psalmist, *I am thy Servant, O Lord, thou hast loosed my Bonds*, Pf. 116. 16. Let all the numberless Mercies that sweeten thy Life, and much more those inestimable ones that are the first-fruits of a blessed Immortality, inflame thy Affections to so *gracious* a Master, that constraining Love may sweeten all the Hardships of his Service, and render thy *Duty*, thy perpetual Delight.

Especially look forward to the glorious heavenly Reward.

Be not therefore backward in serving so *liberal* a Master, whose glorious recompence so infinitely transcends all our defective Duties. Cheerfully abound in his *Work and Will*, as assur'd, that your *Labour in the Lord shall never be in vain*, 1 Cor. 15. ult. Blush that so glorious Hopes prompt you to no more of *Alacrity* and *Vigour* in doing his Will; and do it, with more Delight, as convinc'd of the inseparable Connection between your *Duty*, and your final *Blessedness*.

Ha-

Having thus explained and urg'd upon you the *Advice* that *David* gives his *Son Solomon*. I come to *enforce* it by a more particular consideration of those *Motives* that are here suggested in my Text. And there are four of 'em that lye plain before us, on each of which, I shall briefly touch.

To every one of you that is God-descended from Religious Parents, I may say as *David* do's to *Solomon*, *Know the Lord and serve him, &c.* For First, *He is the Lord God of thy Father.*

Thou hast the excellent *Example* and *Practice* of thy religious Parents, to lead and encourage thee in the performance of thy Duty. He is the God whom they have faithfully own'd and serv'd, whose holy Ways they have recommended to thee from their happy Experience of 'em. They never repented of their Choice, nor saw any reason to change their *Master*. Nay their *practice* will *Upbraid* and *Reproach* thine, if thou dost herein degenerate from their Steps. And as nothing can more rejoyce their Hearts after all their painful Labours and Cares, than to see the *Entail* of Covenant-Mercies continued to their

their Posterity ; so nothing can more effectually wound and break 'em, than to see you casting off the Bonds of that holy Covenant, and departing from that God, to whom they have Consecrated you.

Nay there is yet more in the Argument, He is the *Lord God*, who, as thy *Owner and Ruler*, has an absolute right to thy utmost Obedience and Service ; so that thou canst not *disown* and *reject* him, without the highest *Injustice* and *Ingratitude*. Nay he is the *Lord God of thy Father*, who therefore farther claims a special Interest in thee as his *own*, besides the common Interest he claims in all his reasonable Creatures. Thou art, as it were, *born in his Family and Church*. Thou art *His*, by solemn *Dedication*. Thou *wearest* his *Livery*, and the *Mark of his Covenant*. Thy *Parents* had a propriety in Thee, as *theirs*, and a just right to Consecrate thee to God, and enter thee into his sacred Alliance. (For you may see by Deut. 29. 11. &c. that their little Ones were capable of *entring into his Oath and Covenant*, together with their *Parents*.) And therefore if God resented

it in the *Israelites* as so hainous a Wick-
edness, that they took his *Children* which
they had born unto him, and made 'em
pass thro' the Fire to Moloch, Ezek. 16.
21. &c. Will he resent it as a less Crime
in Thee, if thou shou'dst thy self, at
Years of Age, prostitute thy self to those
wretched *Idols*, thy vile *Lusts*; and
thereby alienate thy self from that God
who claims a right to thee as *born*, and
as solemnly *Offer'd up* to him? O there-
fore consider thou art *pre-ingag'd* unto
God. Thou art not left indifferent
whose Service to choose. He lays the
first as well as the *justest* *Claim* to Thee.
He order'd the *Seal* of his gracious Co-
venant to be sett on the *Seed of Abra-
ham*, Gen. 17. 7, 8. 9. And he no
less justly challenges the same Right to
the *posterity* of *Abraham's spiritual Seed*;
I mean the *Members* of the *visible Chri-
stian Church*, *The Promise is to you,*
and your Children, Acts 2. 38, 39.
Thou canst not therefore *disown* the
Lord God of thy Father, without vio-
lating those holy Engagements thou art
already brought under. Thy rejecting
him will be a perfidious Breach of Co-
venant. And durst thou stand out and

say, I renounce all *Benefit* by that promise God has made, *To be the God of Believers, and of their Seed*; I disclaim all Interest in him as the God of my Religious Parents; If not, O delay not to own him as *thy God*; refuse not the *Duty and Service* which thy Relation to him as the God of thy Father calls for. For thou dost it at thy utmost Peril, as will appear more anon.

2. *He is the great searcher of thy Heart, and understands all the Imagination of thy Thoughts.*

And indeed this *Argument* seems chiefly design'd to urge us to that *sincerity* in owning and serving God, which we are here advised to. q. d. Not only resolve to own and serve the God of thy Father, but do it with all *Integrity*, with the full bent and inclination of thy Heart. Think not to put him off with the service of thy Body, or the Labour of thy Lips, when he requires *Thee* to give him thy Heart, Prov. 23. 26. Dissemble not with him in thy external professions of Homage and Duty to him. Resolve to obey and serve him without any hypocritical Reserves: For all the secret Purposes and Inclinations of thy Heart, all the hidden Thoughts of thy Mind,

Mind, all the *Resolves* of thy *Will*, all the *Motions* of thy *Affections*, however they may be conceal'd from the View of Men, lye all anatomiz'd and open to the peircing Eye of the Omniscient God. So that if thou art not really what thou pretendest; If thy *Heart* and *Life* do not agree with thy *Tongue* in thy solemn Transactions with him, if thou secretly cherishest any vile Lust in thy Affections, if thou indulgest any hidden course of Wickedness, if thou art acted in his Service no farther than carnal Fear or worldly Interest can carry thee; in vain dost thou hope to impose on his all-seeing Eye, which can clearly distinguish *Truth and Reality* from *External Appearances* and *Shews*, the *Power of Godliness* from a specious *Form of it*, and can discern the Hypocrisie of the Heart, under the most plausible Disguises of a formal Profession. To his Judgment therefore thou art chiefly concerned to approve thy self, whose strict Enquiry and Search, nothing can escape.

3. To encourage you to own and seek the Lord God of your Father, here is this *Argument* suggested, *if thou seek him, he will be found of thee.*

i. e. If thou art seriously concern'd to secure an Interest in his Favour and Love, he is most ready to receive thee into a League of Peace. If thou dost earnestly implore his sanctifying Grace, he is most willing to communicate it. If thou art inquisitive after the Knowledge of him, he is ready to instruct thee, and *if thou followest on to know the Lord, thou shalt know him*, Hos. 6. 3. If thou art earnestly desirous of Acquaintance and Communion with him, he is most ready to receive thee into it.

And tho' this be true of all, yet 'tis in a more especial Manner true of those that have been the *Children of Religious Parents*. For as God claims a peculiar Propriety in such as his Children, so he more eminently styles himself *their God*, and gives more abundant intimations of his peculiar Favour to 'em. There must be some real and valuable Privilege included in that *Clause* of his *Covenant*, that he will be *the God of the Seed*, and *Posterity of his Servants*, Gen. 17. 9. 'Tis true it imports no Privilege but what may be *forfeited* by their degenerate Off-spring, (as I shall observe anon) but sure it must import a peculi-

an favourable Inclination to invest them in the invaluable Mercies of his Covenant. And indeed to them the *Promises* of that Covenant primarily pertain, as they are a part of that *visible Church*, which God distinguishes from the *Infidel World* by peculiar Revelations and Offers of his saving Grace. See Rom. 9. 4. To them the *External Means* of it are vouchsaf'd. To them God's *Prophets and Messengers* are chiefly sent to invite them to embrace the Tenders, and consent to the Duties of his Covenant. He appears most ready on his part to continue the *Entail* of Covenant- blessings on them, if they do not cut it off by their wilful Rejection.

So that the *Children of Religious Parents* have particular *Encouragement* herein to their Duty. They above all others have no reason to doubt God's being graciously *found of 'em*, if they will but *seek him*. Covenant-Mercies are as it were reserved in *Store* for you, if you do not ungratefully refuse 'em. O then sometimes *own the Lord God of your Father*. Claim the benefit of his gracious Promise. Lay hold of the merciful Offers of his Covenant. Embrace his happy Yoke and

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Service. The sooner you do this, the greater Assurance you have of his powerful *Assistance* and merciful *Acceptance*. He has promis'd, *those that seek me early, shall find me.* Prov. 8. 17. 'Tis most grateful to him when you do, as it were, give him the *first Possession* of your hearts, and Consecrate the *Flower* and *Vigour* of your Age, to his faithful Service. And cou'd I but this Day persuade you to do so, how might you account this as the *Day* of your joyful *Esponsals*, and from hence date your happy Entrance on that *Life of Grace*, which *Eternal Glory* shall compleat. And you have no reason to *delay*. You have seen several snatcht away of late with a surprizing violence, and some of 'em in the Flower of their Age, concerning whom their Religious Parents wou'd have had very melancholly Thoughts, if they had not discerned some Appearances of early Piety in 'em.

4. And lastly, here is an *Argument* added that may justly deter you from fighting this Advice, *But if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

We may be guilty of *forsaking God*, or of *apostacy from him*, either more *secretly*, when, tho' we keep on some customa-

customary course of External Duties, yet our Hearts are wretchedly estranged from God, when secret *Unbelief* or *Infidelity*, *Enmity* against the *Spirituality* of God's *Worship*, and against the *Purity* and *Strictness* of his *Laws*, prevail and reign there. Especially when herein we decline from what common Grace had before rais'd us to.

But we then more *openly* forsake God, when we openly renounce the Profession of his Truth, or forsake the Assemblies of his People, or relapse from a civilized Conversation, into a course of open and notorious wickedness.

'Tis true indeed the more *open Apostacy of Life*, seems here principally intended, and 'tis against that, this threatening seems principally levelled. And the more we have experienc'd of the *common Operations* of Divine Grace, the more excellent *Means* we have enjoy'd, and the deeper *Engagements* we have been brought under unto God, if we shou'd, after all this, visibly *forsake him*, by *professed Infidelity*, or a course of gross and hainous *Wickedness*, we have the more reason to dread this terrible Threatning: For there seems something in it parallel to

to those awful ones, Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6. Heb. 10. 26. 38.

But we must also consider, that the *secret apostacy* of the *Heart* from God, tends to, and often issues in that more *open apostacy* of the *Life*. And if we indulge the one, we greatly provoke God to give us up to the other.

I know these Words may in part refer to that particular *Covenant* God made with *David*, concerning the *Jewish Scepter* being continued in his *Line* and *Family*. And as *Solomon* was appointed by God to *succeed* him, so he here warns him against *forsaking* God, least he shou'd entirely *cast him off*, as he had done *Saul* and his *Race*. See that parallel Place, 1 Kings 2. 3, 4. But we have no reason to take that for the principal sense of these Words, much less to confine 'em to it.

O then let me plead this one *Argument* more with the *Children of Religious Parents*! Do you not tremble at the thoughts of being *cast off by God for ever*? Wou'd you not apprehend it a dismal thing to have the *Entail* of *Covenant-Mercies* cut off from you and yours? To be entirely *abandon'd* by the
Grace

Grace of God here, to be *disown'd* by him at the great Day, and to be *cast out into Eternal Darkness*, when your godly Parents shall *sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven*? If indeed you wou'd tremble at the thoughts of *this* (as I hope none of you are so hardned in Wickedness, as to think of it without some horror and fear) O tremble at the Thoughts of your *forsaking God now*. Suffer not your Hearts to *draw back*, and decline from him. Beware of rasing out any serious Impressions that have been made upon your Minds. Suffer not your good purposes to Languish and Dye. Lose not that tenderness of Conscience which your Parents have been so careful to cherish in you. Throw not off those secret Duties of Religion, to which you have been early habituated. Venture not on those common gross Pollutions of the World, from which pious Education has contributed so much to restrain and preserve you. *Flee* (dangerous) *youthful Lusts*. Or if you have been entangled, stop betimes, and dare not to take one step farther in the Road of Hell. For if once you break thro' these restraints,

If you turn your backs on the Ways of God, and the Counsels of Religious Parents, if hereby you perfidiously violate your Vows and disclaim your Duty to God and interest in him, O fear and tremble least he also disclaim you, and make you even here the fearful Instances of such as he has openly rejected. Is it not obvious to our common Experience, that none are usually more dreadfully abandon'd by God, and suffered to run out into a greater excess of desperate Wickedness, than the *degenerate Children of godly Parents*? And is not this the visible Punishment of their first *forsaking him*? Shou'd I present to your View, some profligate *Monsters in Wickedness*, and tell you that such you maye'er-long be, you wou'd be apt to startle at it (as *Hazael* did at the Prophet's Prediction concerning him.) But alas, you are in danger of becoming *such*, if once you *forsake the God of your Father*. O let the many *Examples* you behold of *such*, be an awful Warning to you! And dare not to *forsake the God of your Father*, least he shou'd thus *forsake you here*, and remedilessly *cast you off for ever*! And O that this may not be the doom of any that hear me this Day. But my Brethren, *I am persuaded*

suaded better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation. And truly our greatest Hopes are from you, of the rising Generation. For from the prevalency or declension of the Interest of Religion among you, we may form a probable conjecture of the continuance or removal of the Gospel, (or what is the same, of God's continuance with these Churches, or his visible departure from em.) O then encourage our Hearts, and confirm our hopes by your early Zeal, to know and own the Lord God of your Father, and to serve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind ! And may his Grace bless this seasonable Advice to that end ! And since God has removed some that were hopeful that way, let's have the satisfaction of seeing others come on in their room. Since some Plants of Righteousness are so early translated to the heavenly Paradise, let's see new ones spring up, that the Vineyard of God may still abound with 'em, and his Church on Earth be a fruitful Nursery for Heaven. Then shall you who are planted and water'd reap the Advantage; and we that plant and water, the Joy of all our Labours, when God gives such an happy Increase.

F I N I S.